VOLTAIRE

Genius of Mockery

By VICTOR THADDEUS

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To
MAXIM LIEBER

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Of all the intellectual weapons that have ever been wielded by man, the most terrible was the mockery of Voltaire. Bigots and tyrants who had never been moved by the wailings and cursings of millions, turned pale at his name.

LORD MACAULAY

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VOLTAIRE

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PART ONE: *The Notary's Son*

I

THE year is 1694. Louis XIV reigns in France. His court for more than a quarter of a century has been the most magnificent in Europe—the most splendid, in point of display and extravagance, indeed, ever seen by the western world.

This Grand Monarch, this Sun-King, is a short stout man of fifty-six. He wears an enormous wig to give him the dignity of greater height. He is ignorant, bigoted, intensely vain.

One ambition has dominated him during his reign—to concentrate all power in himself. Today he is a despot on the oriental pattern. France is his private estate. The nobles still have medieval privileges, but their share in governing is gone. Lacking responsibilities, they have been reduced to an idle parasitical class with no duty other than that of flattering and pleasing the king. The people exist only to pay taxes.

"The State, it is I!" Louis has said. But, all-powerful as this absolute monarch deems himself to be, does he really rule France?

No, behind him stands a darker more malignant figure—the Church.

In his youth the king was gallant, carefree, wholly given over to pleasure. He grew older. He began to worry about the welfare of his Soul. Gently, insidiously, his Jesuit confessor played on his fears of Death and Hell.

The king's wife died. He secretly married his mistress,

Madame de Maintenon. She was a devout Catholic—the Jesuit grip tightened. Never was Louis allowed to forget those youthful errors which might stand between him and salvation. And never did the seeds of superstition and religious intolerance fall upon ground more fertile than the credulous and uneasy mind of the vainglorious Grand Monarch.

Had he not led a life of notorious gallantry during the Queen's lifetime? Madame de Maintenon and the Jesuits warned him that only earnest repentance could save him from Hell. He must distinguish the remainder of his reign by outstanding acts of piety. Then the eyes of God might overlook his carnal sins.

So today the Grand Monarch, the Sun-King, a flabby gouty man verging upon old age, paces the glittering halls at Versailles, preyed upon by gloomy thoughts. Ten years have passed since, to please the Jesuits, he issued his terrible Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, making a million Huguenots homeless.

The outward splendor of the Court has not changed, but heavy upon it lies a murk of bigotry. And his emblem—a rising sun shedding glory upon France—what has become of that?

The sun is setting. War after war has brought the kingdom to a state of unparalleled destitution. The condition of the peasants in the provinces is so dreadful that it draws from the contemporary writer La Bruyère the following bitterly ironic description of the only inhabitants to be seen in many miles of journeying—

"—certain wild animals, male and female, scattered over the fields, black, livid, all burnt by the sun, bound to the earth that they dig and work with unconquerable pertinacity; they have a sort of articulate voice, and when they rise on their feet, they show a human face."

But Louis's fear of Hell—this the Jesuits have nurtured carefully. In Europe-dazzling Versailles the aging monarch is preoccupied only with his own personal worries. The national suffering has no place in his thoughts. As a child, to learn to

write, had he not copied and re-copied the line, *Homage is due to Kings; They do whatever they like*?

II

In this year 1694 the wife of a Parisian notary gives birth to her fifth child.

Summer has passed. The hollow-eyed peasants look up at a dark sky and see written here the coming of winter. The nobles go a-hunting. Fat Court preachers find no cause for dismay in the approach of the wintry months. They lift their eyes heavenwards as though to gaze upon Him who designed this charming rotation of the seasons. Spring, summer, autumn, winter—each serves its purpose in God's world, which must be the best of all possible worlds, since He made it.

Into this best of all possible worlds, then, is born on the 21st of November the child Voltaire. He is so weak and sickly that no one believes he will live.

His body is thin. He gasps for breath. At times his heart can no longer be detected beating. He lies so still and quiet that the nurse is sure he is dead.

She hurries downstairs. A group gathers around the cradle. There is the notary, meagre, stoop-shouldered, thin-lipped. There is Armand, the elder brother, a boy with a gloomy obstinate face. There is Marguerite-Catherine, the sister, a girl of nine. There are old women of the neighborhood.

But faintly, almost imperceptibly, the heart in the small stunted body is found to be still beating. Yes, there is still life here—for now the child stirs.

For over a year the struggle between Life and Death continues. And for more than eighty years the indomitable Will-to-Live which inhabits this frail human organism will hold it intact through sickness upon sickness, defending from the corruption of the grave the integrity of a glorious mind.

Twelve months of uncertainty, then the notary's latest-born child seems removed from the danger of dying in the cradle.

He is christened François-Marie. But if the boy lives he remains a child-invalid. He is thin, white, with sunken cheeks. As he grows up, he spends half of his days in bed.

One feature alone is striking about his appearance—the peculiar brilliance of his eyes.

Voltaire was the son of François Arouet and Marguerite d'Aumard. The name Voltaire he will assume in his twenty-fourth year, in the same way that Jean Baptiste Poquelin had adopted the pseudonym of Molière.

His father was forty-five at the time of his birth, his mother twelve years younger.

Attempts, diligent but futile, have been made by biographers to uncover the hereditary sources of Voltaire's genius. On the paternal side is revealed only a long line of plodding forebears —families of tanners, weavers, drapers, apothecaries and purveyors. Arouet himself was a hard-working business man, unimaginative, but with a reputation for integrity which had induced such great noblemen as the dukes of Saint-Simon, Sully and Richelieu to turn over to him the handling of their monetary affairs.

Marguerite d'Aumard was socially better born. She came from a family which aspired to rise out of the bourgeois class by buying into the nobility. But nowhere among her ancestors is to be glimpsed even a spark of that bright genius which was to make her younger son famous.

Still she herself remains a woman of mystery. The character of the notary is fully revealed in the long struggle he made to prevent the young Voltaire from following that career of literature which his father defined as the profession only of men "who wished to be useless to society, a burden to their relatives, and to die of hunger." But of Voltaire's mother very little is known.

Only three times, in the whole immense mass of his writings, does Voltaire himself mention her. Once to state that she had

known Ninon de l'Enclos, again to say that she had been a close friend of the Abbé de Châteauneuf, Ninon's last lover, a third time telling how she had once seen the poet Boileau whom she had described as "a good book but a foolish man."

Three brief statements of fact. Plainly she meant little in the life of her younger son. Yet it was this woman—of whom the only further details known are that her health was bad, that two of her children had died in infancy, and that she was never well after Voltaire was born, dying when he was seven—who gave birth to one of the most extraordinary men in all history, the man called by Goethe "the most astonishing creation of the Author of nature—a creation in which He pleased himself to assemble, once, in the frail and perishable organization of a man, all the varieties of talent, all the glories of genius, all the powers of thought."

Temperamentally, because of her acquaintanceship with Ninon de l'Enclos and the gay and worldly Abbé de Châteauneuf, Voltaire's mother would seem to have differed greatly from her sober, practical husband. But even here we cannot be certain. For both were clients of the notary, and she may have come in contact with them only through him.

Yet conjecture re-creates her a woman of considerable vivacity and personal charm. Doubtless, while she made him a good wife, her conjugal relationship with Mâitre Arouet was not the all-in-all of her love-life. Certainly the notary was in no sense the spiritual father of Voltaire. Perhaps he was not his father at all.

Perhaps the little François-Marie who "just out of his cradle lisped in verse" was the offspring of Marguerite d'Aumard and some unknown lover whose identity will always lie hidden from the biographer.

Or again he may have been a legitimate child whose genius was shaped in embryo by those very organic weaknesses which during a lifetime undermined his health.

III

"There are no longer any Pyrenees!"

It is the opening year of the new century. Thus, triumphantly, exclaims the Sun-King on hearing that Charles II of Spain is dead.

The will of the dead king has been opened. It bequeaths to Louis's grandson Philip the whole of the immense Spanish empire.

For years the Grand Monarch has intrigued to have the House of Bourbon rule both France and Spain. Military reverses have dulled of late his earlier ambition to govern the whole of Europe, but now it flames forth anew. Once again France, broken, impoverished by previous defeats, is dragged into war with a grand alliance of the other European nations.

In Paris a boy, propped up in bed, and an old man, discuss the divine right of kings and Christianity. The boy is the child Voltaire, the man is his godfather, the old Abbé de Châteauneuf.

An old man, shrewd, tolerant, courtly, with thin sensitive nostrils and a skeptical smile—rich in experience of the world's shams. A boy with brilliant mocking eyes—eyes in which seem concentrated all the vitality lacked by the frail body, eyes bright with the lustre of youth, yet strangely old and wise.

The eyes of his younger son disconcert the notary. They ask him questions which he cannot understand. They burn their way into his own in a manner which troubles his peace of mind.

He cannot rid himself of the feeling that something mad moves behind them. His uneasiness only increases when the Abbé assures him he is the father of an infant prodigy.

Nor can he but disapprove of the viewpoints which the Abbé brings to little François-Marie. "Fear God: Honor the King!" says the Court preacher, Bossuet. But the Abbé de Châteauneuf seems to be training his son to question all authority, to doubt of everything.

Snatches of their conversations reach the notary's ears as he works at his accounts downstairs, or when he returns from visiting the home of one of his illustrious clients. His pen stops moving when he hears the Abbé reading from Rousseau's [1] Moïsade, in which Moses is characterized as an impostor. He frowns at the shrill peals of laughter mingled with the deeper tones of the Abbé which come down as an accompaniment to verses François-Marie has written parodying such Biblical stories as that of Jonah and the whale. He rubs his sharp chin nervously with ink-stained fingers at allusions to the Jesuits.

Still, though he may shake his head, he cannot help at times being amused at his younger son's quickness of wit. Armand, sixteen, is morose and heavy. His eyes glower already with the sombre light of fanaticism. François-Marie taunts him in clever rhymes, calls him "my Jansenist of a brother." Armand stares at him darkly, slowly finds words for some clumsy retort. It is a battle between a sharp rapier and a dull axe.

These word-combats between the two brothers, so dissimilar in age, vastly entertain the Abbé and the elegant friends he brings to the Arouet household to witness the extraordinary quickness at repartee of his precocious godson, and to show them samples of the child's verses.

And the notary, even though he would prefer the mind of his younger son shaped in a more orthodox mould, is susceptible to the honor of the Abbé's being François-Marie's godfather. In these early years of Voltaire's life his father is still untroubled by those sharp forebodings of disaster which will so torment him later.

He has more important things to think about. A long-cherished ambition is about to be realized. Shortly after the beginning of the new century François Arouet obtains a government position as Receiver of Fees and Fines to the Chamber of Accounts, a state department handling the king's revenues.

The notary was well-to-do. Besides his town house he had a

[1] J. B. Rousseau, the poet, not Jean-Jacques.

country home at Chatenay, near Paris. He could afford to bring up his children, if not in luxury, at least in a very comfortable manner.

After his wife's death, the education of Voltaire seems to have been given over entirely to the Abbé. Arouet's energies were all absorbed by his new duties in the Chamber of Accounts. Armand was learning to follow in his father's footsteps as a notary. The sister Marguerite-Catherine was soon to be married.

So the Abbé continued forming the mind of the boy, encouraging him to take nothing for granted, always to inquire, analyze, set reason above faith.

When his godson was ten years old the Abbé advised that he be sent as a pupil to the Jesuit college of Louis-the-Great in the city. The notary's face brightens at the suggestion. At heart, then, for all his scoffings, the Abbé de Châteauneuf is a godly man.

Under the guidance of the Jesuit fathers should not François-Marie soon acquire reverence for God and King?

. . . . . .

And at Versailles these days what?

Here an old man in an immense wig is receiving news which rocks Europe like an earthquake—news of the terrible French defeat at Blenheim on the upper Danube.

That great army with which the Sun-King had planned to seize Vienna, where is it now? Gone, annihilated—swept out of existence by Marlborough and Prince Eugene.

Twenty thousand Frenchmen changed to corpses on a far-away battlefield! From stricken France rises a universal cry for peace, peace no matter what the price!

The Grand Monarch frowns. He fixes with an angry stare the ministers who beg him to come to terms with the allies. From decaying teeth the royal lips snap back—

"I will not give up a single windmill of my Spanish Succession!"

IV

While hostile armies are making ready to converge on Paris François-Marie Arouet becomes a pupil at the Jesuit college of Louis-the-Great, so-named in honor of the reigning monarch.

The college was the largest and most important of the many educational institutions established by the Society of Jesus in France, having an enrollment of more than two thousand students, and basking in the sunshine of royal patronage.

In this great school, the most famous of its day in France, what glorious vistas of knowledge did the learned Fathers open up for the benefit of the youthful minds in their keeping? Let the man Voltaire himself answer this question. "I learnt here little besides Latin and nonsense."

There is no curriculum of subjects—except etiquette—which can in any way be useful in later life. The main purpose of the college, as of all the other Jesuit institutions, is to make of the pupils men who will bow submissively to the authority of the Church.

The Fathers are cogs in a machine—a powerful and militant engine created for the purpose of crushing Protestantism, of combating the teachings of that Antichrist Luther who dared to call the Pope "the Devil's Hog," of giving to priests supreme temporal as well as spiritual power throughout the globe.

The college had two classes of pupils. There were sons of the nobility,—many bearing names among the greatest in France, who besides being allowed separate bedrooms and their own valets to wait on them had other special privileges—and there was the larger class of boys of humbler birth into which fell the notary's son.

Voltaire remained in the Jesuits' charge until his seventeenth year.

To this austere pile of buildings what echoes penetrate of that grim struggle on the frontiers where the life-blood of France is dripping away?

There stark realities prevail. Ramillies! . . . Oudenarde! Eugene has driven the French out of Italy. The terrible old Englishman, Marlborough, is smashing his way through the chain of fortresses on the Netherlands so long known to Frenchmen by the proud name of the Iron Frontier.

Here, in the Jesuit college, life moves along remote and sheltered channels. Smooth men in robes spin intricate casuistries. In grave measured accents they talk of God, and define His wishes.

Very early the genius of the notary's son became apparent to his astute teachers. With his quick flexible mind, his astonishing skill at weaving word-patterns, what a Jesuit he would make!

But he is too persevering in his attempts to burrow under Catholic dogma, to mock at revealed religion. The boy Voltaire becomes at once the hope and the despair of the Fathers.

Three of them—Fathers Porée, Tournemine and Thoulier—take a particular interest in him, since with them too literature is a major passion. Among the crowd of dull high-born children and stolid bourgeois boys who attend the school because it is the most fashionable in Paris what an outstanding and charming little figure is this brilliant boy whose eyes shine like two jewels!

Father Thoulier is an accomplished Latinist. He lives in a dream-world wherein he wears not a Jesuit robe but a Roman toga. Nostalgia for those long-vanished days of classic grandeur grips this short stout man with the small fat hands. "Read Cicero! Read Cicero!" he exclaims, and his face lights up with pleasure when he comes upon the boy-Voltaire bent over one of his translations during play hours. Years later, it will light up again each time he receives from the man the fame of whose name resounds through Europe one of those gay letters which always begin, "My dear Cicero—." And to his former pupil he replies, "I am tired of men—I pass my days with Virgil, Terence, Cicero—and Voltaire."

Father Porée is another teacher of Latin. He writes plays for the boys to act, and in these the notary's son is soon taking parts. Him the boy Voltaire plies also with questions concerning current events. Father Porée will become head of the college. With him too Voltaire is to correspond, while his old Latin teacher will relate anecdotes of his precocity telling how he "loved to weigh in his little scales the great interests of Europe."

Father Tournemine edits a monthly magazine for the Jesuits. In outward appearance and worldly shrewdness he somewhat resembles the Abbé de Châteauneuf. He writes verses and cannot conceal his admiration for the talent which his pupil has in this direction.

There is a fourth teacher, Father Lejay, who instructs in rhetoric. He possesses none of the urbanity of the other Fathers but is a pious pedant. He has written a book on the "Triumphs of Religion under Louis XIV" and another on the "Duties of a Christian with Regard to Faith and Conduct." He takes especial pleasure in abusing philosophers and through so doing has pushed himself forward into the good graces of the Grand Monarch. With him François-Marie has many an argument—until at last one day the exasperated Father exclaims furiously that here is a boy destined to become the leader of the deists in Europe.

Yet the boy-Voltaire, brilliant as he may seem to his teachers and fellow-pupils, realizes in himself certain limitations. The man writes—

"As early as my twelfth year I was aware of the prodigious number of things for which I had no talent. I knew that my organism was not formed to go very far in mathematics. I have proved that I have no capacity for music. God has said to each man, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. I had some natural power to acquire modern languages; none for the Oriental. We cannot do all things."

It is this same understanding of the boundaries set by Nature on his activities which makes him instinctively shun the sports and games of his companions, and seek instead during play hours the society of his teachers. Can a boy of his frail physique ever hope to excel in such pastimes? The Fathers smile when, taunted by more robust fellow-students because of his lack of interest in athletics, the eyes of their favorite pupil flash, and they hear his quick retort,

"Everyone jumps and amuses himself in his own fashion!"

V

Why had the old Abbé de Châteauneuf, so much a skeptic, advised sending his godson to the Jesuit college?

For several reasons. Much as he abhorred religious intolerance, and little as he believed in the Church whose gown he wore, he knew only too well that he lived in an age when only those within the Church itself, or having powerful friends wearing the robe, could safely criticize it. For others the rack, the wheel, the stake, were still in existence.

He had few fears that his godson would succumb to the Jesuit teachings. Such a mind as he knew François-Marie to possess would never be numbered among their conquests—instead it would emerge from the college shaped to a sharper skepticism. At the same time he would make friends among the Jesuits, and these friendships should help him in later life.

There was another reason, and one which appealed greatly to the notary. Among the students themselves there were valuable friendships to be formed. The boys at the Jesuit college would become the men in whose hands some day might lie the destiny of France. The notary, ambitious to have his younger son become a lawyer, realized the importance of these early contacts. The Abbé saw possible patrons for the future poet. It was at the Jesuit college that Voltaire first met the two sons of the powerful minister of police, D'Argenson, the elder of whom was to become Minister of War, and the younger Minister of

Foreign Affairs—both to be his lifelong friends. Here too he met Argental, Caumartin and other titled youths who became his admirers, and did what they could in later life to protect him from persecution.

Studious, consumed as he is by a desire for knowledge, the young Voltaire is no bookworm, no prig. Zest for life shines in his eyes. He bubbles over with merriment. School friends and teachers alike testify to the compelling charm of his personality while still at the college. He makes friends easily. That art of pleasing which Chesterfield in his letters to his natural son will define as the most worthwhile for youths to cultivate seems his without effort.

He became the school poet. When a crippled soldier, who has served in the Dauphin's regiment, comes to the college and asks one of the Jesuits to write some verses for him petitioning the king for a pension, the job is turned over to the pupil Arouet, who rhymes so to the point that the petition is granted. At Versailles, the Grand Monarch himself, always hungry for flattery, expresses pleasure at the graceful homage contained in every line of the petition, and asks questions about the clever boy whom he has been told wrote the verses.

The Abbé took him around the Paris salons. Here wit was held at a premium. For this is France under the old régime—the France which complacently accepts its appellation "a despotism tempered by epigrams." He becomes the pet of great ladies, whose verses he corrects. He is introduced to Ninon de l'Enclos, ninety now, and huge with fat, but still the most interesting woman in Paris. When she dies a short time later she will leave him in her will a legacy of two thousand francs with which to buy books.

VI

Thin, fragile, his stick-like legs clad in silk stockings and velvet breeches, this youth with the eager face and luminous eyes moves gracefully and easily through gilded halls and sumptuous drawing rooms while dark days hang over France.

The dreadful winter of 1708–9—who can remember another such? The frost comes suddenly on Twelfth Night. It lasts nearly two months. The Seine is frozen—all other rivers in France. Even the sea along the coasts, that too is solid ice. A thaw comes, transient, treacherous. The bitter cold which closes in again kills everything—walnut trees, apple trees, olive trees, vines, all are destroyed. Rural France is desolate.

At Versailles the old man who conducts wars from his antechambers still sends Frenchmen to their deaths. But now he is badly in need of money. Wretched as is the condition of the peasants they must support an additional tax, or his armies will starve.

Though he rules by divine right, though he has written for the guidance of his son the instruction, "Everything there is, in the whole extent of our dominions, belongs to *us* . . . God's will is that whosoever is born a subject should obey without question," something bids the Grand Monarch pause before issuing the edict for further taxation.

How shall he overcome his scruples? He sends for his Jesuit confessor, Le Tellier.

Le Tellier, lean, crafty, devoured by ambition to succeed Richelieu and Mazarin as the third great cardinal-ruler of France, hated even by the Jesuits, smiles unctuously. His whole mobile face expresses astonishment that the king should even faintly question the righteousness of what he contemplates doing. However, to remove all doubt upon the matter, he says he will consult the Sorbonne. He returns with the welcome news that the learned doctors have decided that since all the wealth of the king's subjects belongs to the king, if the king takes it all away he is simply taking what belongs to him. Louis smiles, dismisses the Jesuit with a grateful glance, tells his courtiers that this decision has "removed all my scruples, and restored to me the calm and tranquillity I had lost." The royal hand signs the edict for the additional tax.

Bread riots in Paris. Placards on the city gates and the

churches cursing the king—these posted under cover of darkness, and torn down in the morning by the police. His statues defaced. At Saint Rock a member of the starving mob trampled underfoot—the temper of the crowd grows so furious that only the arrival of D'Argenson himself quiets it. A letter received by M. de la Rochefoucauld, a great noble, from some unknown person who threatens regicide. Eulogies of Brutus.

Long since, gaiety has shifted from the bigoted Court at Versailles to the hotels of the nobility in Paris, and their country châteaux. Here, in the homes of the Dukes of Sully and Richelieu, in the "Temple" of the witty and dissipated old Abbé de Chaulieu, at Sceaux where the vivacious little Duchess of Maine presides over a miniature Versailles, opposition to the vainglorious and pious monarch finds free expression in epigrams and verses lampooning Louis, devout Madame de Maintenon, and the fox, Le Tellier. And here the wit of the Abbé de Châteauneuf's protégé wins for him a quick welcome.

Already, before leaving the Jesuit college, Voltaire is an accomplished courtier. A curious poise, a capacity for assuming, without giving offense, equality with the great personages to whom he is introduced by his mentor, characterizes the notary's son.

It is an age when the poet who knows how to flatter, the philosopher willing to write to order, can quickly find markets for their wares. Will this youth, so apt in the social graces, endowed with so winning a personality, while at the same time gifted with such extraordinary vigor of mind, use his talents only to climb to the position of a gilded sycophant?

Two roads lead away. One, wide and beckoning, leads to affluence through subservience. The other, narrow, tortuous, uphill all the way, lined with dungeons and engines of torment, menaced every life-mile by the armed servants of Intolerance and Superstition, has yet shining above it, far-distant, faint, the star of Humanity. Which will he take?

VII

Voltaire left the Jesuit school determined to be a poet. His father was equally determined he should be a lawyer.

Now it is that the notary snaps out his contemptuous indictment of poets, playwrights, artists in general, "—useless to society—a burden to their relatives—doomed to die of hunger!"

His son had been the most brilliant pupil of his class. He had won more prizes and crowns than any other boy. The poet Rousseau, one visitors' day, had kissed him on both cheeks and predicted for him a glorious future. Let him now capitalize this youthful fame to rise in the useful and honorable profession of law.

François-Marie argued. He tried to appeal to his father's cupidity. Rousseau—so prosperous, whose society is so much sought after by the nobility—had not his father made shoes for the Arouet family? What but poetry had brought him fame and riches? And Corneille, Molière, Racine . . . could any of these be fitted into his father's definition? Was not the immortality they had achieved worth while aspiring to?

He argued in vain. The notary, his eyes flashing angrily, his voice rising to shrill notes of exasperation, threatened to disinherit his son unless he obeyed. Sincere dread of the vicissitudes attendant upon the life of a poet made Arouet inflexible. He could not bear the thought of his son entering so precarious a career. The success of a poet, how unstable, how ephemeral it was! At any moment the patronage making it possible might be withdrawn. Was it not treacherous as that thaw which had laid waste the countryside of France?

Long and hard he had worked to build up the family fortune! And here was Armand, his elder son, becoming yearly more deeply immersed in that Jansenist creed which was greater anathema to the King and the Jesuits than the heresies of the Huguenots! And here was François-Marie, his younger son, wanting to be a poet!

He was determined that François-Marie should make an honest living. So for two years Voltaire went through the motions of studying law in Paris.

"What disgusted me with the profession of advocate was the profusion of useless things with which they wished to load my brain. *To the point* is my device!"

The Code Napoléon has yet to bring order to the shapeless mass of precedents and customs which nowadays constitutes French law. The young Voltaire, so sensitive to precision in language, views with contempt the jargon of legal phraseology, redundant with ambiguities and evasions.

Is this the profession which his father reveres as useful and honest? For him it is tainted with the same parasitism as revealed religion, priests and lawyers alike seeming to make their living by mystifying rather than enlightening.

Days of glamorous dreams, of hopes that soar up from the dreary rooms of the law-school and touch Parnassus. Is he not writing a play? Perhaps at a single stride he will place himself beside Molière, Corneille and the other immortal French dramatists.

Friends to whom he has outlined his tragedy and read the opening scenes assure him it will make a sensation. With such encouragement, what matters it that for the moment he must conform to his father's wishes? He has only to finish *Œdipus,* and get it produced, and fame and independence will be his.

This glittering world of wit and fashion at which the notary looks askance—how its temptations beckon to the young Voltaire!

He has none of his father's sense of social inferiority. Intoxicated by his triumphs at the Jesuit college, by the hospitable way in which society opens its doors to him, he means to have nobles for friends instead of clients.

He neglects his law studies to become a hanger-on at the homes of the great. Daily the circle of his acquaintanceship with genial grandees and irreligious abbés widens. These, to

whom escape from ennui is life's most important problem, are amused by his self-assurance, call him "the little Arouet," and gladly invite him to their suppers.

But to move in such company, even as a poet, requires more money than his father allows him. Shrewdly, he uses even his financial embarrassments as a means of diverting his distinguished friends.

At a gay banquet given by the Abbé Chaulieu he tells of a recent adventure with a pawnbroker. In the pawnbroker's shop he had been surprised to see two crucifixes conspicuously placed on a table.

"I asked him if he had taken them in pledge. He replied no—he had them here because he never made a bargain except in the presence of a crucifix."

A pawnbroker—crucifixes—already the faces of his listeners are wreathed in smiles. Among the Epicureans who foregather at Chaulieu's Temple is there any story-teller as entertaining as the little Arouet?

He has paused. Easily, confidently, he glances around the great table at the faces of these princes and dukes whose digestions he stimulates with his wit. He adds gravely,

"I told him that in that case one was enough—and I advised him to place it between the two thieves."

Hilarious applause; continued as he relates how the pawnbroker, declaring him impious, had refused at first to lend him any money.

With such stories, some having a basis in fact, others the products of his fertile invention, he pays in wit for his suppers.

Youth's confidence is in his veins. His nightly successes, the eager manner in which young noblemen of his age cultivate his society and invite him to share their pleasures, make him see as only imaginary that social barrier which in the notary's vision looms up so massive and impassable.

For in France, land of many abuses though it may be, does

there not exist a great democracy of the intellect of which his father knows nothing? At a supper given by the Prince de Conti the eyes of the notary's son sweep the assembled guests, and he exclaims with ingenuous delight—

"We are here all princes or poets!"

But his younger son's social familiarity with great people frightened the notary. Sooner or later, he was sure, it would be resented as the presumption which he himself felt it to be.

The Abbé de Châteauneuf was dead. There was no one now to come to the defense of François-Marie's conduct with ingenious arguments. Those advanced by the ambitious young poet himself the notary dismissed as nonsense.

He saw nothing to be amused at in his son's money difficulties. They were indications of extravagant tastes which made the prudent notary wince. Armand, more interested in writing Jansenist tracts than in being a notary, was likewise proving a disappointment. In such hands what security could there be for the family fortune after his death? "I have a pair of fools for sons," he cried, "one in verse, the other in prose!"

Plainly he must remove his younger son from the temptations of Paris. Should he send him to live for a while with cousins at Sully-on-the-Loire, a hundred miles from the capital? He was considering doing so when the Peace of Utrecht brought an unexpected opportunity.

Two years ago the War of the Spanish Succession had seemed to be rushing France to total ruin. The Allies had captured Lille. The road to Paris lay open. Small parties of the enemy advanced as far as the forest of Fontainebleau. The old man with the great wig made a gesture of heroism—he will himself mount a horse . . . ride out to meet the invaders . . . die at the head of his Court . . .

Party politics in England made the royal sacrifice unnecessary. The Whigs lost power. The Tories refused to support

Marlborough. The general's wife lost the queen's favor. Malplaquet was Marlborough's last victory. He was accused of continuing the war for his private advantage, was not allowed to advance upon Paris, and in 1711 was recalled to England.

This year died Joseph, emperor of Austria. His death struck another blow for France. For his brother, Charles, now emperor, was the candidate of the Grand Alliance for the throne of Spain. Suddenly it was the House of Hapsburg, rather than that of Bourbon, which threatened the balance of power in Europe. The English and Dutch withdrew from the Alliance, making a separate peace with the French king.

The Peace of Utrecht meant a new French ambassador to the Hague. The Marquis de Châteauneuf, brother of the dead Abbé, received the appointment. He offered to take the little Arouet with him as a page.

VIII

Voltaire was now nineteen.

He left Paris excited at the thought of travel, new contacts. There was glamour in diplomacy not to be found in law. He had promised his father to reform—he would write in his leisure moments, but work hard enough to give the ambassador no cause for complaint. A love affair at the Hague—his first of any seriousness—quickly brings to naught his good intentions.

The girl, Olympe Dunoyer, was the daughter of a Huguenot woman. She was two years older than himself, dark, passionate in temperament, and nicknamed "Pimpette."

Her mother had fled from France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In Switzerland, England, and now in Holland, she lived by her wits, writing anti-Catholic propaganda, and sensational memoirs. A work in seven volumes entitled, "Letters Historical and Gallant," published by Madame Dunoyer in Cologne, had won for her considerable notoriety.

Pimpette had an older sister, already married. When the new French ambassador arrived at the Hague, Madame Dun-

oyer was looking for a husband for her younger daughter. But she did not favor the suit of a notary's son.

The Marquis de Châteauneuf likewise, if for different reasons, disapproved of his page's infatuation. Would Arouet's father be pleased to hear that his son wanted to marry the daughter of a Huguenot? Also, Madame Dunoyer's disapproval carried weight with him. She had influence at the Hague, and he had no wish to make trouble for himself by seeming to connive at his page's passion.

Open meetings between François-Marie and Pimpette forbidden, all the subterfuges of a model romance made their appearance. The interchange of letters, secretly delivered—disguises (Pimpette meeting her lover dressed as a man)—humble confidants and go-betweens (Voltaire's valet, Lefévre, and a shoemaker and his wife)—stealthy signals.

The mother became suspicious. She complained to the ambassador. The Marquis threatened to send his page back to Paris.

Pimpette had a Catholic father, and other relations untainted by heresy, living in France. Voltaire, fearful that the Marquis might make good his threat, but determined not to lose Pimpette, urged her to give him letters which would enable her to follow him to Paris.

"Send me three," he writes, "one for your father, one for your uncle, and one for your sister. I shall only deliver them when circumstances favor."

He adds,

"Let the shoemaker be the bearer of these letters. Promise him a reward, and let him come with a last in his hand, as if to mend my shoes. The servant I send you is wholly devoted to me, and if you wish to pass him off to your mother as a snuff-box maker, he is a Norman and will play the part well."

His passion is deep and serious, but these are the fingers in which the pen must of necessity run and laugh.

Pimpette gets the letters to him. One more rendezvous, she insists, they must have before he goes.

"Do all you can that I may see you this evening. You will only have to go down into the shoemaker's kitchen, and I answer for it that you have nothing to fear, for my mother believes you halfway to Paris. . . . Adieu . . . I adore you . . . I swear that my love will last as long as my life!"

But the Marquis was not yet ready to put his threat into execution. He liked the little Arouet, was willing to give him another chance. Conditional on his good behavior, he may stay at the Hague.

More clandestine meetings. The snuff-box maker, the shoemaker who comes with his last in his hand as if to mend shoes, becomes suspect. The Marquis de Châteauneuf forbids his page to leave the embassy. Madame Dunoyer locks up Pimpette, first giving her a good beating.

The lover is desperate, but the fingers which hold the pen strut proudly aware of what is dramatic in the situation.

"I am here as the King's prisoner! They may rob me of my life, but not of my love for you, my dearest. I will see you tonight though it bring my head to the block.

"For God's sake, do not write to me in so sombre a vein. (Pimpette, since her beating, has threatened to destroy herself.) Live and be cautious. Beware of your mother as your most dangerous enemy. Beware of everyone, trust nobody. (The shoemaker's loyalty is now questionable.) Be ready when the moon rises.

"I shall leave the house incognito, shall take a coach or a chaise, and we will fly like the wind to Scheveningen. If you love me, take heart—summon all your resolution and coolness—keep strict watch on yourself in your mother's presence. Rely on my devotion, at any cost. Nothing can part us—our love is founded on esteem and will only die with our life.

"You had better tell the shoemaker to order the chaise. No, on second thoughts I had rather you did not trust him, I will wait for you at the end of the road. Goodbye, all I risk for you is nothing—you are worth infinitely more. Goodbye, my dear heart."

The elopement came to an untimely end in the little Dutch village of Scheveningen. Madame Dunoyer discovered her daughter's disappearance. She heaped reproaches on the ambassador and the pair were brought back. This time the Marquis did more than threaten. Five days after writing the above letter Voltaire was on his way back to Paris—alone.

IX

Grimly, the notary awaits his son's arrival.

A full account of François-Marie's misconduct had been sent him by the Marquis de Châteauneuf. The ambassador enclosed Madame Dunoyer's angry correspondence with himself.

Voltaire is a week making the three-hundred mile journey from the Hague to Paris. Wisely, when he arrives in the city, he does not go home, but seeks a temporary refuge with friends.

Here news reaches him of the parental activities. His father has disinherited him, has also procured a lettre de cachet with which to have him confined in one of the king's prisons.

"I dare not show myself!" he writes to Pimpette— All depends on her. If she will follow him to Paris, he has courage to brave his father's wrath.

"My lovely mistress, my dear heart, write to me very soon, nay at once. As soon as I receive your letter I shall know my fate."

Will she come? Diplomatically, through friends of the family, he seeks to soften his father. His sentence is reduced from imprisonment to exile to the French West Indies.

All depends on Pimpette . . . and Pimpette when she writes has grown prudent. They must resign themselves to fate she says. Her lover's wisest course is to effect a reconciliation with his father, even though this may mean going back to the study of law. In giving him this advice, he will know she has only his own good at heart, for she still loves him, and always will.

The notary begins to receive submissive letters from his

wayward son. But even in this black hour the pen must dance.

"I consent, O father, to go to America, and even to live there on bread and water, if only, before I go, you will let me embrace your knees!"

Mâitre François Arouet was not an inflexible father. He loved both his sons—in his own way—and, with all his prejudices, was a kindly man.

He agreed to a reconciliation. He tore up the lettre de cachet, promised not to deprive François-Marie of his inheritance. But on one point he stood firm. The son who had disgraced the honorable family name must forthwith turn over a new leaf —in other words put this Huguenot girl completely out of his mind and settle down to the career offered by the practice of law.

Voltaire promised, and emerged from his hiding-place. He became a clerk in the office of a lawyer, M. Alain.

But Pimpette he could not forget. Memories of the Hague rose up to torment him. He decided to carry out the scheme devised by him in Holland for liberating Pimpette from her mother.

He goes to the Jesuit college, sees his old teacher, Father Tournemine, gives him Pimpette's three letters. Will the Jesuits help him in bringing back to the fold an unfortunate girl who has reached an age when the domination of a heretic mother has become unbearable?

Father Tournemine is much impressed by his former pupil's eloquence. The cause seems a righteous one. That it should be Arouet, the brilliant little skeptic, who now shows himself so eager to save the soul of a stranger (the pleader has been careful not to make mention of his intimacy with Madame Dunoyer's daughter—indeed, he conveys the impression he has never seen her personally, friends having given him the letters to bring with him to France) makes the Jesuit doubly hospitable to the idea of assisting Mademoiselle Dunoyer.

He delivers the letters. The Bishop of Evreux, Pimpette's

cousin, is communicated with. Father Le Tellier gives his approval to a plan for kidnapping Pimpette. The king's confessor writes to the French ambassador at the Hague asking his secret co-operation.

Then it is that the Marquis de Châteauneuf reveals the little Arouet's real interest in Madame Dunoyer's daughter, and that the whole scheme falls to pieces.

But the thin brilliant-eyed poet, now caged in M. Alain's dreary office on the Rue Pavée St. Bernard, drawing up and copying documents, would still persevere along some other line were it not for the fact that he can no longer be sure Pimpette loves him.

If she does why does the Holland mail so seldom bring him a letter? "My dear Pimpette, every post you miss writing to me makes me imagine that you have not received my letters . . ."

He stops to dream. She is here, close to his side, but moving away. Desperately, he reaches out to seize and hold the vision." . . . for I cannot believe that absence can have an effect on you which it never can have on me. And as I shall certainly love you for ever, I try to convince myself that you still love me!"

The dying flame cannot be revived. Under the guidance of her mother, Pimpette has already placed her affections elsewhere. She becomes the Countess of Winterfield.

Years later, when under a different name the notary's son has become famous throughout Europe, Madame Dunoyer publishes fourteen of his letters to Pimpette as an appendix to a new edition of the "Lettres Historiques et Gallantes."—and Voltaire reads them again here.

Long before then, however, he has compressed this youthful adventure, the outcome of which leaves him at first inconsolable, into the aphorism,

"Love is the strongest of all the passions, because it attacks at once the head, the heart, and the body."

X

Voltaire stayed with M. Alain six months, living in the lawyer's house, and having his meals here.

A fellow-clerk, Thieriot, shared his dislike for their mutual occupation. He too was interested in literature, though possessing none of Voltaire's genius. They became close friends.

The notary, still touched by the submissive tone of the "O father" letter, believed for a while that his son had reformed. He was doomed to disappointment. M. Alain reported that François-Marie was shirking his work and leading Thieriot astray.

They waste their time discussing poetry and plays. François-Marie scribbles on a tragedy having for its theme incest. They compose epigrams burlesquing the legal profession. They stay out late nights, and wake him and his wife up with the noise they make returning. Arouet's son will have to leave his employ.

Only the fact that Voltaire was competing for a prize offered by the Academy for the best poem praising the king's generosity in building a new choir in the cathedral of Notre Dame stopped his father from again taking drastic action.

The prize was to be a group in bronze. Little as he inclined towards the arts Arouet could not help being flattered by the prediction of distinguished people that his son would surely be winner in the competition. He held himself in control pending the decision of the Academy.

But Voltaire was not the winner. The bronze group went to a garrulous old abbé, author of two volumes of "Panegyrics of the Saints," and one upon "The Eloquence of the Pulpit, or The Best Way of Preaching the Word of God."

Obvious favoritism had made the award. The abbé, du Jarri, stood high in the favor of the Court. The Academy had had its instructions. But if this was common knowledge it did not prevent Arouet from releasing at last his pent-up anger.

His son had failed, that was enough. The Hague disgrace—

this later one of being discharged from M. Alain's service—they were ample fuel to feed the notary's rage, without the addition of the still further shamelessness on François-Marie's part which was now heaped upon it.

For the youth of twenty, instead of quietly accepting his defeat, turned the full force of his wit upon the pious abbé of sixty-five. Old du Jarri was not over-burdened with knowledge of natural history. In his prize-winning poem he had declared that the glory of the Grand Monarch was known throughout the earth, equally at the *burning* as at the frozen poles. The poem abounded in similar ludicrous flatteries. Voltaire deluged the abbé with satirical verses. He went further, attacking the academician La Motte who had awarded the prize to du Jarri in a mocking little poem entitled *MUD*.

The notary gasped. He was convinced his son had gone out of his senses. His own worst fears seemed about to be realized. Had not similar verses, aimed at a member of the Academy a few years ago, ruined Rousseau and driven him into exile? The Academy, with its powerful Court connections, could not only likewise ruin François-Marie but might have *him*, innocent parent of the audacious poet, dismissed from the Chamber of Accounts.

At this crisis when Mâitre Arouet was on the point of severing all connections with his incorrigible younger son aid came to the latter from an unexpected quarter. A school-friend, the nephew of Louis-Urbain de Caumartin, Marquis de Saint-Ange, an aged magistrate of great renown, for whom the notary had the most profound respect, placated the furious father by dwelling upon the advantages of having François-Marie continue his legal studies under the supervision of the Marquis.

The notary was susceptible to the honor of such an invitation. In the fall of this year 1714 Voltaire, a disappointed candidate for the Academy's bronze group, but happy in his new freedom, rode away from Paris and the dreary office of M. Alain to take up his residence in the ancient and beautiful château of Saint-Ange in the forest of Fontainebleau.

XI

The months passed at Saint-Ange were indeed profitable ones for him, but not as his father imagined.

He had for host a very old and garrulous man who much preferred relating anecdotes of his long and eventful life to discussing law.

The Marquis de Saint-Ange was an encyclopedia of the events of Louis XIV's reign. For generations his family had held important positions at Court. He could disclose intimate details of the reigns of Louis XIII and Henry IV. All that was colorful in the history of the seventeenth and half of the sixteenth century was stored away in his memory. Here was a lawyer of a very different breed to M. Alain.

And never, doubtless, did the old Marquis have a better listener than this friend of whom his nephew had so often spoken with admiration. Voltaire exerted himself to please. For the time being he put aside his tragedy of Œdipus, content to draw out his host. What materials for a vivid and personal history lay in the memories of the ancient aristocrat!

It is from the Marquis de Saint-Ange that he first hears the anecdote of the Grand Monarch and the battle of Ramillies. How upon receiving news of the terrible French defeat the king exclaimed mournfully, "Has God, then, forgotten all that I have done for him?"

At the château of Saint-Ange Voltaire makes the first notes for his "Age of Louis XIV."

But the Marquis was more than a story-teller. He was a hero-worshipper. His face loses its cynical expression as he leaves the reign of the Grand Monarch to tell of the adventurous career of Henry of Navarre.

The bloody Massacre of Saint Bartholomew . . . Henry's long struggle with the anti-Protestant League . . . His tolerance in protecting the Huguenots by the Edict of Nantes when he became king and embraced Catholicism in the hope of ending

the religious wars which for so many years had ravaged France. . . .

Bluff, kindly, shrewd, frank in his vices, this noblest of French kings in the eyes of the Marquis, what a gallant figure he makes set alongside the present bigot at Versailles!

A king who cringed to no confessor, nor conducted wars from his Court. *In the fight follow always the white plume in my helmet!* Who died nobly. His carriage stops, the fanatic Ravaillac slips to the wheel. A low cry of pain from Henry as the hidden knife enters his side— "What is it, Sire?"—"It is nothing," answers the king, and falls.

The old Marquis rises. With feeble steps, leaning on his gold-headed cane, he leads the way through the château. Ah! what memories cling to its walls—for was it not built by Henry for his beloved mistress Gabrielle?

In his wasted hand the cane trembles as he points to pictures hanging on the walls. Look! there are the Huguenot leaders, Coligny and Mornay and the king's great minister Sully. And there is the fair Gabrielle! And there is Henry himself, wearing his white plume!

His enthusiasm passed into his listener. Could not a great epic poem, a veritable French Iliad, be written around the life of Henry of Navarre? In Voltaire's mind the *Henriade* took shape.

But even while the garrulous old Marquis talked, and the notary's son listened, history was in the making. At Versailles that other monarch, so different from Henry IV, lay watching death approach. September 1st, 1715, the old man whose great wig added a cubit to his physical but not an inch to his mental stature, breathed his last.

XII

The death of Louis XIV marked the end of an epoch.

He had been king of France seventy-two years, his reign being—and remaining—the longest of any European monarch.

Who misses the Sun-King now he is dead? Only his valets and his dogs.

His insatiable thirst for glory, his bigotry as he grew older, had alienated the affection of nobles and people alike. "On the 9th of September," writes the Duke of Saint-Simon in his diary, "the body was buried at St. Denis. Very little expense was gone to—and nobody was found who cared sufficiently for the late King to murmur at the economy."

His atrocious abuse of power—for how much of this was early environment responsible? Louis XIV became king when five years old. His mother and her lover the crafty minister Mazarin deliberately neglected his education to keep the reins of government in their own hands. He was scarcely taught to read and write.

Self-willed and vain, suspicious of intellect in others because conscious of his own ignorance, this weakling of destiny, flattered by courtiers, assured by his preacher Bossuet that "kings are gods, they bear on their forehead a divine character—to speak evil of them is almost blasphemy," brought misery to a nation of twenty million people through the vainglorious follies of a long reign of misgovernment.

Vaguely, at the end, the king doubts the righteousness of his policy of intolerance towards the Huguenots. Sudden rage convulses him four days before his death. It is rage born of fear—the fury of a bewildered old man who suspects deception.

These priests, in whose counsels he has placed such implicit trust, have they truly saved his soul? To his confessor, Le Tellier, and a cardinal, standing beside his bed, he cries—

"I call you to witness that I have done nothing except what you wished! It is you, then, who must answer to God for what I have done, whether too much or too little. My conscience is clear—it is that of an ignorant man who absolutely abandoned himself to you during the whole of this business!"

Fast, fast, earthly glories slip away. Not the Grand Monarch, not the Sun-King, lies here, but an old man writhing in agony. The stench of gangrene from the fistula that has rotted away

his lower body drives everyone from the death-chamber but his valets.

Vivid, terrible glimpses into the depths of his own soul. . . . A sudden and appalling sense of loneliness . . . The abyss—so dark, so unfathomable—has it moved nearer? . . . A cold sweat bathes the body of the dying old man. He shrieks for Madame de Maintenon . . . She too has deserted him—has left the palace.

But in a mirror he sees two of his valets at the foot of the bed, weeping. A warmth stirs in his heart. He has been kind to his valets—and when his fickle Court, his wife, have abandoned him, *they* remain. A strange humility, a tenderness born of the consciousness of these humble human ties that still bind him to earth, grips him and brings peace—enables him to master his pain, and say gently,

"Why do you weep? Is it because you thought me immortal?"

He dies at eight o'clock in the morning.

XIII

"I was the slave and tool of an unknown power. O pitiless Gods! yours are my crimes!"

In Paris the notary's son is writing the last lines of his tragedy. Is he thinking of the stiffening corpse at Versailles as he puts into the mouth of the incestuous Œdipus this bitter denunciation of those gods of the Pagans—that god of the Christians—who, omnipotent, as able to do good as evil, yet choose in the world of their own creation to make men sin and suffer?

Voltaire had returned to Paris shortly before the king's death. Rumors of Louis's illness had reached Saint-Ange. There, as throughout France, they provoked excited conjectures as to the future. The king's heir, as Louis himself had been when he came to the throne, was a boy of five. Who would be Regent during his minority—Orleans or Maine?

Voltaire joined the procession streaming into the capital from

all parts of the kingdom to seek employment under the new government. He is on the road to St. Denis, burial ground of the kings of France for eleven hundred years, when the royal funeral passes.

"I saw little tents set up along the road, in which people drank, sang, laughed. The downfall of the Jesuit, Le Tellier, was the principal cause of the universal joy. I heard several spectators say that the torches which lighted the procession ought to be used to set fire to the houses of the Jesuits."

At last the reign of "the old Maintenon" and the Jesuit fox is at an end. What new era of tolerance will be ushered in? What golden age of the arts, perhaps, now that a pious Court no longer crushes with its censure?

The king's will is opened. It leaves to his natural son, the Duke of Maine, all power during the boy-king's minority. Indignantly, the peers, led by the dead king's nephew Philip, Duke of Orleans, contest the will. It is set aside, and Orleans proclaimed Regent.

The good-natured Regent summons the ministers of state, orders them to bring to him a list of all the lettres de cachet issued during the late reign. Monstrous cases of injustice come to light. He sets at liberty all prisoners except those guilty of serious crimes.

The deep dungeons of the Bastille disgorge their occupants. Over the drawbridge, through the great gates, in melancholy procession, troop the victims of private malice and religious persecution.

But one old man stands bewildered. . . . He has been in the Bastille thirty-five years. No one knows, he does not know himself, why he was confined. An Italian traveler, he had been arrested the day of his arrival in Paris. He had never been examined. It is plain now to all that some mistake was made—that he was arrested through confused identity. He asks sadly what he is expected to do with his liberty? He is penniless, knows not a person in all France, or a single street in Paris. His

Louis XIV

relatives in Italy are doubtless dead, and so many years have passed during which no news has been received from him that his property there is sure to have been divided. He knows not what to do.

The Bastille is his only home. Humbly he begs to be allowed to remain here until he dies. His petition is granted, with as much liberty as he may desire.

Paris is jubilant. Happy omen indeed the Regent's clemency. Also he has promised to keep France out of war. And if the kingdom is now bankrupt, has not a Scotchman named Law proposed to the Regent a system which will bring to France undreamed-of prosperity?

In no heart was the optimism of the times more firmly enthroned than in that of the young Voltaire. At last he heard opportunity knocking at the door.

Impatiently he brushed aside his father's remonstrances, giving the notary definitely to understand that from now on he intended to live his own life. Had he not powerful friends in both the Maine and the Orleans factions?

Having finished his tragedy he tried to interest the Duke of Orleans in it. But the theme of incest had no appeal for the self-indulgent and notoriously dissipated Regent who had been accused of this very relationship with his equally dissolute daughter, the Duchesse de Berri.

The Regent's coldness did not lessen Voltaire's determination to have the play produced. Having failed with Orleans he would try Maine.

Two of the closest friends of the Duchesse de Maine were the Abbé Chaulieu and the Grand Prior, Philip of Vendôme. He knew them both—had they not often laughed the loudest at his epigrams and witty stories? At one of the Temple suppers he read Œdipus to them—they acclaimed it a masterpiece.

He loaded the two old men with flattery. To the abbé he writes—

"That supper did great good to my tragedy. I believe it would be only necessary to drink four or five times with you to produce an excellent work."

The Grand Prior plays the flute. Also he has a reedy voice of which he is vain. Of princely rank, he aspires to be called Royal Highness like princes of the blood instead of plain Highness. Voltaire compromises by addressing him as *Altesse Chansonière,* or Warbling Highness.

They praise his play to the Duchess. She promises to finance its production if the author will join her staff of poets engaged in lampooning the Regent.

Thus Voltaire throws in his lot with the opposition.

XIV

"Little Arouet, a very satirical and a very imprudent poet, has been exiled. He has been sent to Tulle, and is already out of Paris."

In May an old nobleman, the Marquis de Dangeau, makes the above entry in his diary.

Many years later the Duke of Saint-Simon, haughty pillar of the old régime, will apologize for recording the same fact in his celebrated Memoirs—

"Arouet, son of a notary employed by my father and me until his death, was exiled and sent to Tulle in the early part of 1716, for some verses very satirical and very impudent. I should not amuse myself by writing down such a trifle, if this same Arouet, having become a great poet and academician under the name of Voltaire, had not also become, after many tragical adventures, a manner of personage in the republic of letters, and even achieved a sort of importance—among certain people."

The Regent was not lacking in a sense of humor. Some of the little Arouet's witticisms had given him amusement. Audacious they might be, but sharply pointed with truth. When the Regent, to cut down the enormous expenses of the Court, sold

half of the king's five thousand horses, he was shown an epigram in which the Duchess of Maine's head poet suggested he would do better if he dismissed one half of the asses which had surrounded his late Majesty.

But there were other epigrams and verses which issued from Sceaux that amused the Regent less. They imputed to him crimes he had never committed. They attacked his private life, coupling his name vilely with that of his daughter. Since these libels were anonymous he had no proof of their authorship, and it is improbable that Voltaire wrote them. They were too deadly in earnest, too cruelly denunciatory, to come from the pen which when it accused seldom failed at the same time to provoke laughter.

It was Arouet, however, who as the most brilliant of the Duchess's propagandists must be made an example of. Futile, his protestations of innocence. He must leave Paris—and immediately.

Tulle was a manufacturing town three hundred miles from Paris. Voltaire's dismay before the prospect of banishment to such a dreary and distant spot was all that the Regent had expected. Let this little Arouet, thought the stout and ruddy Duke who also knew how to joke, see what inspiration he could derive for his epigrams and verses from tan-yards!

It was the notary who with the characteristic inconsistency of a parent came this time to his son's rescue. If he himself had meditated reforming François-Marie by imprisonment, shipping him to the West Indies, he still could not bear the thought of the government taking similar measures. His pleadings shortened the distance of exile from Tulle to Sully-on-the-Loire. Here, he gave assurance there were relations whose good advice would "correct his son's imprudence and moderate his vivacity."

But Sully-on-the-Loire was also the seat of the Duke of Sully, descendant of Henry IV's great minister, and friend of the Marquis de Saint-Ange.

This studious young man who sits surrounded by books in a

fine library—this slim youth strolling at his ease through great halls, looking at pictures on the walls—this debonair courtier gallantly bowing to fine ladies, and bringing smiles to all faces as he talks—who is he? It is Voltaire making himself at home in the Duke's château.

Not many weeks had he remained in the humble abode of those relations whose hospitality included good advice. He became a visitor, then a guest, at the château. His mind, virile, dynamic, flexible, adapts itself unconsciously to situations. He has forgotten the Œdipus, and is eagerly making the most of the opportunity afforded him by his exile to collect further material for his epic poem on Henry of Navarre.

The Duke comes to spend the summer months at the château. Now there is no lack of entertainment. While the notary still thinks of his son as grieving in exile, he is writing to a friend in Paris,

"You would be astonished, doubtless, if I should tell you that in this beautiful wood we have *white nights* as at Sceaux, in a grand saloon of elms lighted by an infinite number of lanterns, where was served, the other evening, a magnificent supper to the music of a band, followed by a ball of more than a hundred masks superbly attired."

Balls, private theatricals, displays of fireworks, picnics on the Loire, rides through the beautiful countryside, fill the nights and days. Yet a feeling of restraint grows. Other guests come and go—he *must* remain.

"I write to you," he says in a letter to the Abbé Chaulieu, "from a place that would be the most agreeable in the world if I had not been exiled to it, and where there is nothing wanting to my perfect happiness but the liberty of leaving."

The hunting season arrives, filling the château with sportsmen. These red-blooded killers who "spend the lovely days assassinating partridges," he looks upon with secret disdain. "For my own part I take some interest in Apollo, but not much in Diana. I hunt little, and rhyme a great deal." But one thing he envies them too—their freedom.

The Duke has returned to Paris. Now the sportsmen begin to leave. He watches the carriages recede. In the woods the leaves are falling. Must he alone stay here the winter?

Melancholy indeed seems the deserted château after the gaiety of the summer. The grand saloon of elms—gone its thick foliage where the lanterns gleamed. The bare branches are stark against the sky. The nights have grown cold. Laughter, the rustle of dresses, the sound of the violins and the dancers' feet —instead of these now the wind wailing around the château.

Paris—oh to be in Paris again! He deluges the Regent with complimentary verses. He writes to friends of Orleans, also his friends, begging their intervention. He is notified he may return.

His joy is not shared by his father. In the Regent's leniency the notary, who has come to look on François-Marie's exile as the best thing which could happen to him, sees only a foreshadowing of more disgrace.

"Perhaps, Monseigneur," writes the old man despondently to his business chief, the President of the Chamber of Accounts, "even you may have heard that it has pleased the Regent to recall my son from his exile. The exile distressed me much less than does this precipitate recall, which will complete the ruin of the young man, intoxicated as he is by the success of his poetry, and by the praises and welcome bestowed on him by the great, whom, with all the respect that I owe to them, I must regard as really poisoning him."

XV

Back from Sully, Voltaire no longer lived in his father's house, but took a room in a Paris lodging house, the sign of the Green Basket.

This was his headquarters. Mostly, however, he is to be found in the homes of his titled friends. Who will back his tragedy? The Duchess of Maine has promised, but he is learn-

ing that the promises of the great lag in fulfillment. From château to château he wanders, advertising the *Œdipus*, employing all his persuasive powers to drum up interest in the play.

Meanwhile the plotting against the Regent had grown more serious. If the Duke of Maine lacked energy for intrigue not so his wife, the tiny Duchess. No larger than a ten year old child, her diminutive body contains a fiery and unscrupulous will. To regain the regency snatched from her husband, she will if necessary involve France in civil war, or war with foreign powers. With Cardinal Alberoni, priest-dictator of Spain, she is planning a coup d'état which will make her virtual ruler of France during Louis XV's minority.

Not yet is the Alberoni conspiracy suspected, but the increased activity of her staff of poets makes the Regent keep watchful eyes on Sceaux. He hears that once again the little Arouet has become a conspicuous figure at the court of the Duchess.

In the spring of 1717 appear two compositions destined to make early trouble for Voltaire.

The first, the *Puero Regnante*, an inscription in Latin designed to accompany a weeping figure of France, reads—

A BOY REIGNING;
A MAN NOTORIOUS FOR POISONINGS [1]
AND INCESTS, ADMINISTERING;
COUNCILS IGNORANT AND UNSTABLE
RELIGION MORE UNSTABLE;
THE TREASURY EMPTY;
PUBLIC FAITH VIOLATED;
INFURIATE WRONG TRIUMPHANT;
DANGER OF GENERAL SEDITION IMMINENT;
THE COUNTRY SACRIFICED

[1] The Duke of Orleans was suspected, unjustly it would seem, of a couple of poisonings in the royal family to clear his way to the throne.

TO THE HOPE OF A CROWN;
ALL INHERITANCE BASELY ANTICIPATED;
FRANCE ABOUT TO PERISH!

The second is the *I-have-seens!*

"*I have seen* the Bastille and a thousand other prisons filled with brave citizens, faithful subjects! . . . *I have seen* the people wretched under a rigorous servitude! . . . *I have seen* the soldiery perishing of hunger, thirst, indignation, and rage! . . . *I have seen* a devil in the guise of a woman (Madame de Maintenon) during the kingdom, sacrificing her God, her faith, her soul, to seduce the spirit of a too credulous king! . . . *I have seen* the altar polluted! . . . *I have seen* the blackest of all possible acts, which the waters of the entire ocean could not purge, and which posterity will scarcely be able to believe—bodies stamped with the seal of immortality removed by profane and sacrilegious hands from that sojourn of gracious men, Port Royal![1] . . . *I have seen* the prelacy sold or made the reward of imposture! . . . *I have seen* nonentities raised to the highest rank! . . . *I have seen*—and this includes all—the Jesuit adored! . . . *I have seen* these evils during the fatal reign of a prince whom formerly the wrath of Heaven accorded to our ardent desires! . . . *I have seen* these evils, and I am not yet twenty years old!"

Both run like wildfire through Paris. The *Puero Regnante,* so called from the inscription's opening line, "A Boy Reigning," is the boldest attack thus far made on the Regent. It not only proclaims him a murderer and incestuous, but also in the line "All Inheritance Basely Anticipated," hints darkly at intentions to do away with the boy-king.

To the Regent it is by far the more serious of the two. But the *I-have-seens!* if aimed at the dead Sun-King and not at himself

[1] The Society of Port Royal, an association of Jansenist scholars near Paris, had been ruthlessly broken up by Louis XIV., even the bones of their dead disinterred and thrown to the dogs.

are none the less *lèse majesté*. He sends for one of the most able members of his elaborate spy organization, and gives him the assignment of tracking down the author, or authors, of the two audacious writings.

Captain Beauregard possessed qualities invaluable to him in his profession.

He was gay, witty, an ideal drinking companion. He made friends easily, disarmed suspicion everywhere by his apparent candor. He seemed to be no more than a pleasure-loving young officer who passed his whole time in idleness and dissipation. . . . In and out of the coffee-houses and taverns he made his way keeping a shrewd ear open to the conversations. . . .

Because he is on friendly terms with most of the Opposition poets he feels, when he leaves the Regent, that he will have little difficulty in obtaining the desired information.

But here he is mistaken. No one can he lure casually into being his informer. No one in fact knows. In the case of the *Puero Regnante*, the author's identity will remain always a mystery. A Jansenist named Le Brun will later confess to the *I-have-seens!*

The Captain knows his business too well, however, to report failure to his employer. He begins to build up a case against the poet who has already fallen under suspicion, and been exiled,—the little Arouet. At every opportunity he encourages Voltaire to disparage the Regent.

Voltaire indeed felt no gratitude towards the Duke of Orleans for allowing him to leave Sully. Had he not been unjustly exiled? To gain his own ends he might stoop to flattery, but no gesture of magnanimity could win him over. All his life he will be the enemy of arbitrary power which assumes that a pardon rights a wrong.

Little thinking that the friend to whom he talked so freely was in the pay of the Duke of Orleans he poured out his contempt for the self-indulgent Regent who while France still lay ruined by the War of the Spanish succession saw fit to waste his

energy in such riotous living that he frequently administered affairs of state in a drunken stupor.

And at this time there happened to be visiting France a monarch by contrast with whom the Regent became more conspicuously ineffectual—Peter the Great of Russia.

Voltaire sees the Czar on the streets of Paris—"little thinking," as he writes forty years later, "that I should one day be his historian."

This tall vigorous man, self-educated, simply dressed, eager to acquire knowledge wherever he goes, radiating energy—how he overshadows in the eyes of the thin little observer the effete French aristocrats who notice only the visitor's "rude unpolished manners, while the legislator, the great man, and the creator of a new nation, entirely escaped their attention." An emperor traveling for instruction! A Czar who to give Russia a navy had worked as a laborer in the Holland shipyards!

Smilingly Captain Beauregard listened to the little Arouet's contemptuous comparisons of the slothful Regent with the dynamic Czar. Did not such remarks constitute in themselves *lèse majesté?* Need he feel any twitchings of conscience when he is on his way to his employer with fabricated evidence which convicts Arouet of writing both the Puero Regnante and the *I-have-seens!?*

The Regent may be no fit ruler for a ruined country desperately in need of reconstruction, but his good nature is genuine.

If Arouet has been ungrateful, if he has attacked him with shameful libels, still the Regent hesitates to lock him up. He prefers to give him a chance to run away.

They meet in the gardens of the Palais Royal one May afternoon.

"Monsieur Arouet," says the stout apoplectic Duke of Orleans, blinking his shortsighted eyes, and playing on the *I-have-seens!*, "you have doubtless seen a great many things, but I think I can show you something you have *never* seen."

"Indeed, Monseigneur,—and might I ask what it is?"

"The inside of the Bastille."

The Regent speaks the name of the grim fortress lightly but his glance is meaningful. On Voltaire's face the expression of rapturous self-satisfaction does not change. He is walking on air this fine Spring day, for has not his tragedy just been accepted by a group of players who will shortly produce it in Paris?

Bowing with affected humility, he flashes back— "Ah, Monseigneur, permit me to consider it already seen!"

The Regent smiles as he walks away. But will this little son of a notary, so brilliant at repartee, be sensible enough to take the hint?

XVI

The diligent old Marquis de Dangeau makes another entry in his diary. This time it reads—

"The little Arouet has been put in the Bastille. He is again accused of writing very imprudent verses. He seems incorrigible."

To sympathetic friends, in tones of mingled rage and anguish, the notary exclaims—

"I foresaw clearly enough that his idleness would lead to some disgrace! Why did he not go into a profession?"

PART TWO: *The Barrier*

I

THIS first time Voltaire was in the Bastille eleven months.

He had been arrested early on the morning of May 16th while still in bed at the sign of the Green Basket. Before being taken away he had time to slip his valet one short note to the Duke of Sully—

"M. de Basin, lieutenant of the short robe, is here to arrest me. I can tell you nothing more about it. I know not what I am accused of. My innocence assures me of your protection."

Downstairs a closed carriage waiting. Politely, the king's lieutenant opens the door. Voltaire steps inside.

From the bank of the Seine the Bastille looms up. A sentinel's challenge rings out. "Who goes there?"

"Command of the king!"

In the usual manner, as Voltaire descends, the soldiers cover their faces with their hats so as not to see the prisoner.

The governor gives the lieutenant a receipt for the prisoner. Voltaire is searched. He signs a slip for the articles taken from his pockets—some money, an eye-glass, a pair of scissors, keys, writing tablets, and a letter of Pimpette's.

Slowly, ponderously, the drawbridge to the inner fortress comes down. He is led across, sees behind him a great gate closing.

Now he is climbing a dim stairway in one of the towers. The under-officers who have escorted him across the moat open a door, usher him into a small eight-sided room . . . bow . . . leave . . .

Sounds of a key turning . . . bolts being driven home . . . retreating footsteps . . .

Then silence.

How conscious of the stillness he is!

The room is simply but not uncomfortably furnished with a table, two chairs, and a small bed. It also contains a fireplace. But the massive door—the thick walls that deaden all sound! Ten feet of rock between him and the sunlight! The little window so cunningly placed that through it he can see neither earth nor sky!

With the silence, the solitude, Voltaire's sense of importance as a State prisoner vanishes. He sits hunched up on the bed, the bright, restless eyes alone contradicting the dejection of the frail drooping body . . . Why is he confined? . . . How long must he stay here? . . .

From the depths of this grim prison where so many have suffered and died something malignant and icy reaches up and clutches at his heart. *The King's guest!* What irony in the phrase! That old man who so few months ago tottered drunkenly into the light of day—he too *for thirty-five years* was the King's guest!

The mood of sudden unreasoning terror which makes him catch his breath, which sweeps him to the verge of leaping to his feet . . . shouting wildly . . . beating frantically on the massive door . . . passes. If the body is caged the mind still has wings and a world of fancy in which to soar.

While Voltaire was in the Bastille he composed the greater part of his famous epic poem, the *Henriade*. At first he carried the lines in his memory. Later, allowed ink and paper, he wrote them down.

His, too productive a nature to allow of impotent brooding. Once adjusted to prison life, his brain was ceaselessly active. But if he had chafed under the constraint of having to stay at Sully, how much more did he feel the loss of his liberty now that he was shut up in a fortress. The Regent allowed friends

to visit him. Through them he continually protested his innocence.

Nor was the notary inactive. Voltaire's father was now in his seventieth year. Could he die in peace knowing a son of his to be in the Bastille? Arouet went humbly from one great nobleman to another begging their intervention.

Voltaire knew by now why he had been put away, though still in ignorance concerning the identity of his informer. He wrote letter after letter to the Regent appealing to his sense of justice. Le Brun, conscience-stricken, confessed himself the author of the *I-have-seens!* The Regent was now inclined to credit the little Arouet's protestations that he had not written the *Puero Regnante* either.

The old notary, hearing of Le Brun's confession, goes in person to the Duke of Orleans to plead for his son.

April 10th, 1718, the following item is inscribed in the Paris police-registers—

"The intention of his Royal Highness is that the Sieur Arouet *fils*, a prisoner in the Bastille, be set at liberty and relegated to Châtenay, near Sceaux, where his father, who has a country house there, offers to take charge of him."

II

Eleven months—a year gone by and the *Œdipus* still not produced! Voltaire is now twenty-four. Can he forget that at the time of his arrest his tragedy was about to be rehearsed?

The opportunity—is it lost irrevocably? With the whole of his aggressive nature he rebels against the thought. He must capitalize his imprisonment to revive interest in his suspended play. But here at Châtenay what can he do? Of what use is freedom if he may not go to Paris?

Now it is that he changes his name. Let his release from prison be a turning point in his life! Let Paris, when it sees him again, call him no more the little Arouet, think of him no more as a notary's son! Let him plunge forward into the future

bearing a pseudonym which his own genius will make great!

To Paris! To Paris! Stately pirouettes of gratitude from the dancing pen with this destination in view.

To the Lieutenant of Police—

"The first use I must make of my liberty is to write and thank you for having given it to me. I believe I have profited by my misfortunes, and can assure you that I am not less grateful to the Regent for my captivity than for my freedom."

To the Regent's minister, the Count de Maurepas—

"I do not ask you to shorten the period of my exile, nor for permission to pass one hour in Paris. The only favor I solicit is that you will be so good as to assure His Royal Highness that I am as much obliged to him for my imprisonment as for my liberty, and that, as I have profited by the one, I shall never abuse the other."

A little slip of the pen as it dances once again for the Chief of Police—

"I have committed many faults; but I beg you, sir, to assure his Royal Highness that I am neither such a knave nor such a fool as ever to have written against him. *I have never spoken of that prince but to express my admiration for his genius.*"

Deep obeisances— "With the profoundest respect—your most humble servant—your most humble and very obedient servant . . ." To Paris! To Paris! . . . But no hand beckons.

Then suddenly the discovery that it was Captain Beauregard, amiable friendly Captain Beauregard, who testified against him. Proofs obtained that the Captain fabricated his evidence. Now the pen pleads passionately just for two hours, two short hours in Paris, only time enough to speak to the Count for a moment, to "throw myself at the feet of His Royal Highness!"

Request granted. At last an interview with the Regent!

The Duke of Orleans suffering as usual from a hang-over. Voltaire on his toes to give a good show. The Duke begins to laugh—he is convinced!

"Be prudent," he says "and I will take care of you."

A last lightning sally from the irrepressible mocker—

"I should like nothing more than to have His Majesty charge himself henceforth with my board, but I beg your Royal Highness not to trouble yourself farther with my lodging!"

A witty way indeed to ask for a pension, thinks the Regent. But he is not disposed to grant a full pardon immediately. If innocent this time, a little discipline should do no harm to this poet of humble birth who always has his tongue in his cheek. He shall be allowed to come to Paris occasionally on probation.

So permits to leave Châtenay for the city and stay here overnight . . . three days . . . a week . . .

Then, October 12th, his Royal Highness's permission registered—

"—for the Sieur Arouet de *Voltaire*[1] to come to Paris as often as he pleases."

III

November of this same year witnessed Voltaire's first great dramatic triumph.

The astonishing success of the *Œdipus* was not entirely due to the play's great merits. This is the year when national enthusiasm for John Law's fabulous Mississippi Scheme reaches its highest pitch, when the whole of France is trying to get rich quickly by buying shares in the Company, when rumors of the prodigious gold and silver mines lying along the banks of the vast and mysterious American river cannot be extravagant enough to suit the popular taste, when competition among investors is so keen that a Duchess kisses the Scotch magician's hand publicly to persuade him to take her money—"if a Duchess does this, what will not other ladies do?" pertinently queries Madame, the Regent's wise old mother—when her prodigal son

[1] Why Voltaire took this pseudonym is not known for certain. Among his mother's ancestors, however, a family of this name has been traced, and it was probably from here. The name may originally have been spelt *Volterre*.

is giving away fortunes (in Company paper) to his friends—and when Paris, buoyant with expectation, is in a very receptive mood to attend a new tragedy written by a playwright who has just undergone the romantic experience of being locked up in the Bastille.

The *Œdipus* was played forty-five nights in succession at the Théâtre-Français—the longest run for any play given in Paris up to this time. The Regent and his daughter went to see it. It was performed at Versailles before the boy-king—His Majesty seemed entertained, if less so than by his favorite sport of shooting sparrows. The author was given a small pension by the Regent, also a gold medal.

Voltaire famous! Hailed as the hope of French drama! Yes, this little Arouet in disguise has become a personage. Compliments from every one. But no compliment, perhaps, greater than the one paid him silently by Baron Gortz, adventurer-diplomat.

Shall he, muses the Baron, kidnap this mangy little lion of the Paris salons—in the manner of Frederick I of Prussia, whose agents are combing Europe for tall men for his grenadiers—so that he may have the pleasure of exhibiting him to his young barbarian of a master, the war-like Charles XII of Sweden, who boasts that he "does not know what a poet is?"

But the Baron is in Paris on deeper schemes, which the kidnapping of Voltaire might endanger. Reluctantly he abandons the idea.

A maiden triumph in which is born Voltaire, shrewd man of business, Voltaire, unparalleled self-advertiser.

Quick! the play must appear in book form. Tactfully he dedicates it to the Regent's mother. Complimentary copies to the Regent, to the Regent's daughter, to the Regent's sister the Duchess of Lorraine, to George I, king of England. Profits from play and book he invests in Law's bubble, but only holds his shares a few weeks, selling at a profit before it bursts.

When will he feel again the thrill of this, his first great suc-

cess? Twenty-four—and his name shouted from the housetops! Twenty-four—and famous!

A reckless joy possesses him. Never has his manner displayed such confidence, his tone of ease with great nobles been so marked.

To the Prince de Conti who shows him some verses written praising the *Œdipus* he says gayly—

"Monseigneur, you will be a great poet—I must get the king to give you a pension!"

Emboldened by the applause with which the distinguished audiences receive the line in his play attacking the shams in religion—*"Priests are not what a foolish people think them to be—their knowledge lies only in our credulity,"*—he one night puts on a costume and comes on the stage carrying the train of the High Priest of Jupiter, enlivening the solemn dialogue by skipping about with the train, peeping under it, and indulging in similar hokum not calculated to add to the dignity of the whiskered Pontiff.

Boundless his optimism. Are there any liberties which his genius will not permit him to take? . . . But there is present at one performance of the *Œdipus* an old man who shakes his head.

Tears of pride, of dread, stand in the notary's eyes, as he listens to the applause, as he watches François-Marie being called into the boxes of the great to receive compliments. A dream! A dream! mutter the old man's thoughts . . . You are young, my son . . . there will come an awakening!

IV

The huge success of his first play determined Voltaire quickly to write another with which to follow up this success.

A more ambitious project this new tragedy. For the *Œdipus* he had used a story centuries old . . . dramatized by Sophocles . . . in more modern times by his own countryman Corneille. The verse might be brilliant, the mood—revolt against

a relentless fate, instead of the antique resignation—startlingly new, but there remained the weakness, as the author then saw it, of the tragedy's theme being not original, but taken from the well-known legend. In Artemire the plot also should be his own.

Energetically, frequently in bed—coughs and fevers had never ceased, and never would cease, their onslaughts upon his "crazy constitution"—he threw himself into the writing of the new play. At the same time he investigated the possibility of publishing his epic.

In the *Œdipus* he had attacked the Church, but the remote date and setting of the play had shielded him from persecution. Who in the audience could not identify members of the Order of Jesus with the sly and grasping pagan priests? Still there was no valid ground on which the Church could make a formal complaint. With the *Henriade,* different. In Catholic France could a Protestant king be made the hero of a poem, the Catholic League against which Henry of Navarre had warred be painted grasping and sinister?

How to outwit the bigots? An inspiration! The Duke of Orleans, is he not descended from Navarre? The Regent receives a letter, begging him, at his convenience, to listen to "some fragments of an epic on the illustrious ancestor whom you most resemble!" Letter pathetically signed—as if memories of Bastille still eclipse triumph of *Œdipus*—"your very poor Voltaire."

Will it work? The Regent seems interested. He sets a date for the reading. Voltaire, spick and span in velvet and lace, wig thickly powdered, stands declaiming his fragments. The Regent, lolling in a chair, sluggish with wine and food, occasionally relieves his stertorous breathing with a sonorous belch. Frankly, he likes the poem. But he cannot possibly approve it for publication. The church people would make too much trouble for him.

Voltaire bows and leaves. Until he can think of a new plan he will put the poem aside, and give his whole time to the play.

. . . . . .

The *Œdipus* was revived after Lent. Its continued success made the players eager to produce *Artemire,* which when completed, declared the author, would be vastly superior to his first effort.

But in quick succession now occur events which again drive him from Paris.

Charles XII of Sweden has been killed while laying siege to the town of Frederikshall in Norway. The patient Swedes, weary of war,[1] celebrate their king's death by chopping off the head of his intriguing minister—none other than Baron Gortz. The Baron's business in Paris, which had prevented him indulging his whim of kidnapping Voltaire, had consisted in scheming with the Duchess of Maine and Cardinal Alberoni to overthrow the Regent. A letter from the Spanish ambassador in Paris to Alberoni, which establishes the guilt of the Maines and dead Gortz in this conspiracy, is now intercepted.

The Regent locks up the ambitious little Duchess and her husband. Scarcely have they been in prison a week when all Paris is reading three short poems—the "Philippics."

In these poems the Regent—his Christian name Philip—is charged more openly than ever before with incest and murder. They contain further a vivid scene in which he attempts to poison the boy-king. Who is the author? Actually a man named La Grange-Chancel who has a private grudge against the Duke of Orleans. But since La Grange-Chancel—a dramatist—has hitherto written nothing showing great talent, and the verse of the "Philippics," if libelous, contains much power and beauty, public opinion immediately shouts—Voltaire!

The Regent sends for him. His Royal Highness does not believe the reports, but suggests that it might be wise for the poet to leave town for a while.

. . . . . .

[1] When Charles XII, a boy of fifteen, came to the throne in 1697, Denmark, Poland and Russia had fallen on Sweden thinking victory easy. Charles had beaten them all. For ten years this young king led an invincible army. Then, as would happen later to Napoleon, he met disaster marching on Moscow, his army being annihilated by Peter the Great in the battle of Pultava. All the fighting he did afterwards was an anticlimax. He was thirty-six when shot through the head at the siege of Frederikshall.

"I pass my life from château to château. At present I am at Villars."

That night when Voltaire had come on the stage gamboling with the train of the High Priest of Jupiter a lady in one of the boxes had inquired the name of the young man who by making a monkey of the Pagan Pontiff so daringly ridiculed the present-day ecclesiasts. The author had been brought to her box and introduced. She was the Duchesse de Villars—her husband the veteran marshal of the Grand Monarch's wars.

In Paris, during the winter, she had seen a great deal of Voltaire. She was young, beautiful, coquettish. The marshal was more than twice her age. Could she help preferring the society of a young man expert at paying compliments? Hearing that Voltaire was again virtually, if not formally, exiled from Paris, she invited him to her château.

At Villars the Duchess encourages Voltaire to fall in love with her. The old marshal fights his battles over again for the benefit of the visitor whom he knows to be collecting material for a history of Louis XIV's age, but Voltaire's attention is not as rapt as when he listened to the Marquis de Saint-Ange. His eyes wander often to the young wife.

He cannot work. Day and night his thoughts center on the Duchess. Torn by this passion, his play no longer interests him. It is the one time in his life, perhaps, when he cannot apply to himself his own maxim that there is "no more powerful remedy for the sorrows of the heart than deep and serious application of the mind to other objects." A period when he is totally unproductive.

For the Duchess, though she leads him on, does not return his infatuation. Vanity alone makes her play with the poet. At last he tears himself away, moves on to the next château.

What hope indeed for him in the role of lover? He is thinner far than when he courted Pimpette at the Hague. If his eyes have not lost their brilliance, they seem to have drained all life from his body. Has not the Regent's daughter spoken of him as "that wicked mummy?"

To the Marquise de Mimeure—the friend corresponded with when he first came to Villars—he now writes,

"You make me feel that friendship is a thousand times more precious than love. It seems to me that I am not at all made for the passions. I find something ridiculous in *my* being in love, and I should find it more ridiculous in those who should be in love with me. It is all over. I renounce it for life."

Weeks at Sully . . . at Saint-Ange . . . at the palatial home of the Duke of Richelieu. Laborious hours with *Artemire*, pushing back memories of the siren Duchess. Thus a summer and a fall pass.

Now there comes good news from Paris. The true author of the "Philippics" has been discovered. Voltaire may return.

Artemire goes into rehearsal. The first performance takes place at the Théâtre-Français February 13th.

Voltaire's second play was a complete failure. The tragedy's plot—a king made jealous of his wife by accusations which he finds to be false only after he has received his death-wound—lacked the timeliness of that of the *Œdipus*. What but the incest theme had drawn such crowds of the Regent's enemies to the theatre—had made the Regent and his daughter attend to brave public opinion? The new tragedy might owe nothing to Sophocles or Corneille but it lacked the alluring element of scandal.

Also it was produced at a moment as unfavorable as that of the *Œdipus* had been favorable. This year of 1720 is the year when the Bubble bursts. Suspicious crowds are already besieging the Company's offices. No Duchesses press forward nowadays to kiss the Scotchman's hand—instead Law is called the Devil's oldest son and there are shouts he ought to be hanged.

The play fails, and fails badly. Hisses instead of cheers. Is there perhaps another reason for its failing? Voltaire, always quick to see his plays through the eyes of the audience, admits to himself that it is fatally weak. In his eagerness to write an entirely original play he has overstepped himself. *Artemire*

contains powerful passages and clever epigrams but it lacks the action, the swift movement, the suspense of his first tragedy. He re-writes it; then, as it still ceases to interest, drops it for good.

His depression during this year of the panic is deepened by the suspicion that his epic is likewise not what he has thought it. In his despondency he exaggerates the importance of every criticism, until at last one night, his throat raw with coughing, and his head feverish, after listening to several suggestions for alterations made by a company of friends, he takes the poem and throws it into the fire.

A smell of burnt clothing fills the room as one of the company snatches the manuscript out—

"Do you remember," asks—years after the *Henriade* has achieved greatness as the only important French epic—Hénault, the man who had rescued it from the flames, "that your poem cost me a pair of lace ruffles?"

Is the sick body stealing a march on the agile mind? Voltaire's friends know him for too gay a companion not to wish to change his mood. Invitations press on him. Roaming from château to château again he forgets his troubles.

But one day he receives news which makes him abruptly abandon this brilliant life of pleasure and hurry to Paris. His father is dying.

V

The notary died of dropsy on New Year's day, 1722.

Doubtful to the end of his sons' ability to manage their own affairs, he had made the President of the Chamber of Accounts, M. de Nicolai, trustee for his estate.

An incongruous family, this, grouped around his death-bed. Armand, the fanatic, who wears hair shirts, puts faith in miracles, and would like nothing better than to be crucified. Voltaire, whose only God is Reason. The plump and bourgeois sister, Marguerite-Catherine,—with her husband M. Mignot, who works in the Chamber of Accounts.

Shortly before his death the old notary had resigned to Armand his business position, yielding twenty-six hundred dollars a year. His property he divided equally between his three children, deducting from Voltaire's share, however, what he had paid out for the latter's debts—some eight hundred dollars. Unlike his brother and sister, also, Voltaire was only to have a life-interest in his inheritance.

Could he be trusted with the principal, had wondered the notary? The failure of *Artemire* had brought rushing back all his mistrust of the career chosen by his younger son. Still, because he wants to be fair, he modifies the life-interest clause in his will as follows—

"If it should happen that my son, on completing his thirty-fifth year, has adopted the regular course of life to pursue which I could have much desired to lead him—in such a case, as I make this settlement only from a just fear that he will otherwise dissipate his slender patrimony and fall into want, I humbly beg the First President of the Chamber of Accounts to be good enough to accept the paternal power and authority which I now give him, to destroy and cancel the said settlement in the event of my said son adopting a regular course of life—just as I myself would do were it possible for me to survive these my last wishes."

Troubled even yet by scruples on the justice of his will he adds a codicil revoking altogether the life-interest clause—but death comes before he can make up his mind to sign it.

So the well-meaning father passes away, convinced that in his person departs the Arouet genius for making money, and little imagining that hair shirts will not hinder Armand from adding considerably to his patrimony, still less that his reckless younger son will become a capitalist on a scale grander than any aspired to in his own wildest dreams, loaning money to princes, importing grain from Africa, supplying an army with rations, managing an industrial colony—the richest man of letters that ever lived!

Little dreaming this—yet not wholly a false prophet. To the last the notary is haunted by forebodings of disaster lurking in his younger son's familiarity with the great. Armand, too, is arrogant in his bigotry. But old Arouet's thoughts are mainly of François-Marie when he closes his will with the monition—

"To the utmost of my power I exhort my two sons to remember the advice which I have given them more than once, and by which it seems to me they have profited but little, namely, that good sense desires and commands us to accommodate ourselves to the capacity of those to whom we think ourselves superior in intelligence and knowledge, *and that we ought never to make them feel that superiority.*"

Too cautious, Armand, ever to bruise himself against this barrier of birth, so insurmountable in the eyes of the notary . . . But Voltaire?

VI

Notice in the "Mercury," a Paris gazette—

"M. Arouet de Voltaire, the death of whose father was recently announced, has obtained from the king, through the recommendation of the Duke of Orleans, a pension of two thousand francs. His poem of Henry IV will appear very soon, and it is confidently expected that the work when printed will sustain the reputation which it has acquired from perusals of the manuscript."

Not for four years would Voltaire come into his share of the paternal estate. M. de Nicolai does not believe in haste. To get action out of the venerable First President of the Chamber of Accounts, Voltaire will indeed have to threaten his guardian with a law-suit.

His father's death left him for the time being poorer rather

than richer. He had lived at home as little as possible, but the home was there whenever he wanted to go to it. Now Armand was in possession. While the notary lay dying there had been a brief flare-up of affection between the brothers, then their mutual dislike reasserted itself. He lost no time in acquainting the Regent with the fact that he was now homeless, with no steady source of income, and was granted the four hundred dollar pension in addition to that of three hundred which he already collected from the Regent's privy purse.

What are his thoughts as he contemplates the future? The time has come when he must strike out for himself. When his father dies he is twenty-eight, author of one successful play. What plans does he make?

Hear Voltaire, the eighty year old capitalist, answer this question—the Patriarch of Ferney disclose to poets the Secret of his business success—

"I am often asked by what art I have come to live like a farmer-general, and it is good to tell it, in order that my example may be of service.

"I saw so many men of letters poor and despised that I made up my mind a long time ago that I would not increase their number. In France a man must be anvil or hammer; I was born anvil. A slender patrimony becomes smaller every day, because in the long run everything increases in price, and the government often taxes both income and money.

"It is necessary to watch the operations which the ministry, ever in arrears and ever on the change, makes in the finances of the State. There is always some one of these by which a private person can profit without incurring obligation to any one; and nothing is so agreeable as to be the author of your own fortune. The first step costs some pains; the others are easy. You must be economical in your youth, and you find yourself in your old age in possession of a capital that surprises you; and that is the time of life when fortune is most necessary to us."

More artful in money matters, this young poet, than people gave him credit for being. A goodly proportion of acquisitiveness in his make-up. With eyes ever watchful for opportunities. Fingers nimble to pick plums.

In Voltaire's multifold personality the Business Man will always shine conspicuous. At twenty-eight he is determined to prove to the world that poetry and prosperity can go together.

To be rich—rich not through inheritance like his noble friends, but through his own efforts—this is his dream. But he wants something else also—Power!

If wealth is necessary for him to live in that affluence which he has always envied his friends, only power can give him the privilege of writing what he pleases.

So four years now devoted to attempts at self-advancement . . . Four years of fruitless scheming and plotting to obtain public employment . . .

Diligent court paid to the Duke of Orleans, and his minion, avaricious and profligate Cardinal Dubois. "If I could induce your Eminence to employ me in something, I entreat you to believe that you would not be dissatisfied with me, and that I should be eternally grateful for being allowed to serve your Eminence!"

A small distasteful assignment. Spying on a foreign spy, Levi Salomon. No important discoveries.

More prowling through cabinets. One day an unpleasant adventure.

Scene, the rooms of M. Claude LeBlanc, Minister of War. Enter Voltaire, job-hunting. Enter, a moment later, Captain Beauregard, apparently much at home, in fact invited to dinner.

It is Voltaire's first social contact with the Captain since his Bastille experience. The Captain, gay and charming as ever, nods airily to the little poet. Voltaire's eyes bulge. His tongue will not work for a moment, then—"Sir!—I was well aware that spies were paid for their services, but I did *not* know that

their recompense was to eat at the minister's own table!"

The Captain, being a military man, has a strong sense of honor. Voltaire gone, he informs LeBlanc he will have satisfaction for this insult. The Minister of War dislikes violence—when Beauregard insists, however, he advises him then "to manage it so that no one will see anything of it."

Scene, next, a bridge near Versailles at nightfall. Voltaire crossing it in a sedan chair. Suddenly the Captain on top of him brandishing a cane. Result of this adventure a small but permanent nick in Voltaire's nose, and the Captain sent to jail for a while.

More cooling of heels in the Cardinal's ante-chambers. A broad hint to his Eminence that poets are not receiving the proper attention nowadays—

"I pray you, Monseigneur, not to forget that formerly the Voitures were protected by the Richelieus."

The Cardinal, laconically— "It is easier to find Voitures than Richelieus."

True, thinks Voltaire, but Voitures are not Voltaires, your Eminence.

His perseverance is finally rewarded by a mission to Cambrai, ancient French town a hundred and fifty miles northeast of Paris, near modern Belgium. Here to be a grand gathering of diplomats: purpose, the time-honored one of "assuring the peace of Europe." The nature of Voltaire's mission a mystery. Probably to spy on the diplomats.

From Cambrai a trip to Holland where the Protestants should be interested in his poem on Henry of Navarre. (Contrary to the optimism expressed in the "Mercury," there seems little chance of printing the *Henriade* openly in France.) A stopover at Brussels to visit exiled J. B. Rousseau.

J. B. Rousseau, unfortunately, has grown old, woolly, and devout. He is shocked at a poem Voltaire reads him ridiculing Christian prejudices and superstitions. "Spare yourself, sir," he exclaims, "the trouble of reading more—it is a horrible impiety!"

J. B. Rousseau's turn now to read a poem. Title, "Ode to Posterity." Voltaire listens politely. "That is an ode, Master, which, in my opinion, will never reach its address." The name of Voltaire is anathema to J. B. Rousseau from this time on.

A trip which besides netting some subscriptions for the *Henriade* enables the picking up of a little money through purchase of foreign currency. To friend Thieriot in Paris—"Send me the *exact* price paid in France for an escalin, a florin, a pantagon, a ducat, and a Spanish pistole!"—Voltaire returns with his saddle-bags full of these coins, which he sells in France at a small profit.

From the frontier to the capital an itinerary planned to include all châteaux which may contribute subscriptions. Voltaire works his way around Paris, distributing circulars, and puffing his poem with vivid descriptions of the impatience exhibited by the Dutch to see it in print, until he is a hundred miles south, at the city of Orleans, where he makes himself the guest of the famous exiled Englishman, Lord Bolingbroke. He reads the *Henriade* to Bolingbroke and the latter's French wife, the Marquise de Villette, and does not fail to write to Thieriot, his Paris publicity agent, that "in the enthusiasm of their approbation, they place it above all the poetical works which have appeared in France!"

The news gets around. Old Mathieu Marais, advocate to the parliament of Paris, and acquaintance of Voltaire's father, who has many times sympathized with the notary on the presumptuous manner in which his younger son mingles with people above him in social station, hears about it. He too keeps a diary. In it he writes—

"If the poem is as fine as that of Racine [1] we shall have two great poets who are petty men; for this Racine, whom I have seen two or three times, has but a frivolous mind, and is without tact in conversations; and the other is a fool who has thought to be a man of the Court, who has got himself caned,

[1] Son of the great dramatist, and author of a long religious poem, recently published.

and who will never know anything because he thinks he knows everything."

Are there many who still like Mathieu Marais think of Voltaire only as "the little Arouet?" Time will soon show.

But in this epic which the sickly little poet-courtier peddles so tirelessly, no truckling indeed to cardinals. The *Henriade* catalogues all the crimes committed by intolerant religion since the red dawn of its history. Mothers offering to Moloch the smoking entrails of their own children . . . Iphigenia led by her father to be sacrificed at the altar . . . the early Christians hurled from the summit of the Capitol and driven into the arena . . . the hellish massacre of St. Bartholomew . . . Jews burned every year for "not abandoning the faith of their forefathers" [1] . . . It strips the mask of holiness from priests, and shows the crafty bloody-minded schemer beneath, setting nation against nation, brother against brother, for material gain . . . It shows this same religion used in all ages by ambitious chiefs as a pretext for wars and crusades.

Can it hope to get by the censor when it contains such lines as "A great man ought not to dread the futile thunders of Rome"—when it speaks of the Roman church as a power "inflexible to the conquered, complaisant to conquerors, ready, as interest dictates, either to absolve or to condemn"—when it pictures the monstrous scene of men "invoking the Lord while slaughtering their brothers, and, their arms wet with the blood of innocent children, daring to offer to God that execrable incense"—when through its verse move many of those very priests "whose fatal eloquence kindled the fires that have consumed France"—when it contains the ringing and terrible indictment *"To him who avenges the Church all becomes legitimate: murder is just; it is authorized; nay, it is commanded by Heaven!"*

Bolingbroke's admiration, the fact that he dedicates the *Henriade* in manuscript to the young king, alike do no good.

[1] Twenty were burned by the Portuguese as late as the year 1717.

Permission to publish the poem is finally and definitely refused. Voltaire makes preparations to print it secretly in Rouen.

A busy year for him, this one of 1723. Besides job-hunting, haggling with censors, collecting subscriptions, pushing the secret publications of the *Henriade,* Voltaire writes another play. Also he catches smallpox.

He recovers, and to the Baron de Breteuil (father of a lady who for sixteen years will play a very important part in his life) sends the following curiously optimistic report of the nature of the disease which has kept him in bed a month, with an account of the remedy which he is confident alone made possible his quick recovery—

"Smallpox is, in a simple form, merely the blood ridding itself of its impurities, and positively paves the way to more vigorous health.

"The doctor gave me emetics eight times; and instead of the strong cordials usually recommended in this complaint, made me drink a hundred pints of lemonade. This treatment, which you will think extraordinary, was the only one which could possibly have saved my life—and I am persuaded that the majority of those whom this fearful disease has killed would be still alive had they been treated as I was."

What *does* Voltaire believe now that he is on the verge of thirty? We know, for it is about this time that he makes his first confession of Faith and Unfaith.

He had returned from Holland on horseback, but the journey out he had made in the carriage of a grand lady, the Marquise de Rupelmonde. She was a young widow, and going his way. As they ride they talk. The Marquise is curious to find out what Voltaire really thinks of religion.

To Voltaire this method of travelling is in every way agreeable. The Marquise is accompanied by a large retinue of servants. She is pretty, sympathetic, and pays all expenses. He feels he can do no less than write her a poem which will clear up her doubts.

It is this poem, the "Epistle to the Beautiful Uranie," to be known also as the "For and Against," which he reads to J. B. Rousseau at Brussels, and which so shocks the old poet, in his youth so iconoclastic, but now busy writing psalms.

Voltaire advises the Marquise to view the prodigies related in the sacred books of all religions as colorful legends rather than true history. He scoffs at the idea of taking at its face value the conception of a God who created human beings only to condemn most of them to everlasting torments, who, as he puts it, "drowned the fathers, and then died for the children!" He treats as a vast absurdity the whole story of the life and death of Jesus—the Incarnation and the ineffectual Atonement—when credence must be attached to it as having a divine significance; is it possible to believe that, except for the fortunate few converted by Christian missionaries, the Indian tribes of America, and other remote nations, are doomed to hell-fire for the sole crime of not being acquainted with this poignant but small human tragedy occurring nearly two thousand years ago in the little land of Palestine?

This, the Unfaith. What, then, to believe?

Beautiful Uranie, believe this—

"Believe that the eternal wisdom of the Most High
Has graven with his hand, in the depths of your heart,
The Religion of Nature.
Believe that your soul, in its native simplicity,
Will not be the object of God's eternal hate.
Believe that before his throne, at all times, in all places,
The heart of the just person is precious.
Believe that a modest Buddhist monk, a charitable dervish,
Will find more favor in his eyes
Than a pitiless Jansenist,
Or an ambitious Pope.
Ah! what indeed does it matter the name under which we pray
to him?
He receives every homage, but by none is he honored.

Be sure he does not need our assiduous services.
If he can be offended, it is only by unjust deeds.
God judges us by our virtues, not by our sacrifices!"

Voltaire rises from his sick-bed in the château of Maisons and hurries to Paris. At last, after nine years of effort, his *Henriade* is in print!

Thieriot is in Rouen supervising the manufacture of the secret edition. A woman—how much women mean in Voltaire's life, though very different the part they play compared with that in the life of his younger contemporary Casanova!—has agreed to help him smuggle the books into Paris. Madame de Bernières owns wagons and barges which go between the two cities—the French Odyssey enters the capital cunningly concealed in bundles of her merchandise.

Its success is immediate. The underground circulation can scarcely supply the demand for this forbidden book, which the police are known to be after. The fashion for every great lady to have a copy hidden somewhere in her boudoir. A topic of conversation in all the salons. In the course of the next century will sell 300,000 copies, and be translated into six foreign languages. Makes writing of epics a rage in France. To be imitated, parodied, burlesqued, pirated and formally excommunicated by the Pope.

Even old Marais is carried off his feet by the general illicit enthusiasm. He slips home hugging a copy, rises early from the dinner table to seek the privacy of his own room, locks the door carefully, draws a chair to the fire, dons his spectacles, picks up the little volume—later the same night crouches breathless over his diary—

"I have read it! It is a wonderful work, a masterpiece of the mind, as beautiful as Virgil. Behold our language in possession of an epic poem, as of other poetical works! I know not how to speak of it. There is everything in the poem. I cannot think where Arouet, so young, could have learned so much.

Madame du Châtelet

It is like inspiration. What an abyss is the human mind! The surprising thing is that every part of the poem is temperate, well ordered, urbane; we find in it no crude vivacity, no merely brilliant passages, but everywhere elegance, correctness, happy turns, an eloquence simple and grand,—qualities belonging to mature genius, and nowise characteristic of the young man."

Four years they are of vain search for a patron . . . Dubois and the Duke of Orleans die in 1723. The young king marries Marie Leczinska, daughter of Stanislas, deposed king of Poland. No hope in Louis XV, at the age of fifteen already turned bigot. He will indeed out-shine in vices and cant all previous members of that Bourbon family which, in Napoleon's words, "never forgot and never learned anything!" But Voltaire hurries to Court to see what he can do with the young queen.

Again with little success. The shabby rôle of poet-courtier sickens him. "All the poets in the world, I believe," he writes to Thieriot, "have come together at Fontainebleau. The Queen is every day assassinated with odes, sonnets, epistles, and marriage songs. I imagine she takes the poets for court fools; and if so she is very right, for it is a great folly for a man of letters to be here, where he neither gives nor receives pleasure." To his lady-friend, de Bernières, a cry from the heart—"Oh, madame, I am not in my element here!"

His latest play, *Mariamne*, like *Artemire* has failed. He has written a satire on courtiers, "The Babbler," which the Queen finds amusing. Her interest in Voltaire goes no further, however, than calling him "my poor Voltaire," and granting him a pension of three hundred dollars.

But is he not the author of the *Œdipus* and the *Henriade?* The foremost man of letters in France? If the ministry mistrusts his mind too much to give him public employment, how enormously during the past four years he has widened his circle of distinguished friends! Does he not know everyone in France

worth knowing? Dukes and princes, even a king—true, Stanislas of Poland is a king of the comic-opera variety, on his throne one minute, off it the next, but still he is a king—are they not glad to meet him as an equal because of his genius?

Comes the thing now which reveals to Voltaire his true social standing in the old régime.

VII

The Chevalier de Rohan was a nobleman whose low vices repelled even his decadent peers. But he belonged to one of France's greatest families. His uncle was a cardinal.

He desired the famous actress Adrienne Lecouvreur for his mistress. She had played the lead in Voltaire's last tragedy, *Mariamne,* and was a close friend of the poet, perhaps more than a friend, since when she dies and he attacks in a poem the intolerance of the Church in refusing her Christian burial because she had been an actress he will seek shelter from the rage of the priests by appealing to the public whether the fact that he had been "her admirer, her friend and her lover," might not partly justify his indignation. The Chevalier was jealous of this intimacy which his own money and rank could not buy.

A night at the opera. In the lobby a thin little man the center of a laughing group. On the outskirts of the group the Chevalier biting his lip. This little notary's son with the quick tongue—who does he think he is?

Voltaire enters the box of the actress. Laughter from here now. Heads craned from other boxes to listen. The gay, the beautiful, Adrienne's clear laugh ringing above the rest. The Chevalier lounges into the box. Suddenly, in a pause, his voice —loud, contemptuous—

"Monsieur de Voltaire—Monsieur Arouet—what *is* your name?"

Voltaire swings to the voice. Ah! the Chevalier!—Rohan the goaty, the unwashed! The mocking smile leaps to his lips—

"It is true I do not trail after me a great name—but I know how to honor the name I do bear. . . . I begin my name—the Chevalier de Rohan ends his!"

And that we ought never to make them feel that superiority!

The Chevalier raises his cane. Voltaire's hand goes to his little toy sword. Adrienne Lecouvreur tactfully faints. Incident closed for the moment.

A few days later Voltaire is stimulating the digestions of the guests at the dinner-table of the Duke of Sully. A servant comes to his chair. He is wanted outside a moment.

He leaves the dining room. What is this? Two coaches drawn up near the door of the mansion. A lady-admirer, perhaps, who has not wanted to give her name? He smiles expectantly.

A man approaches and addresses him respectfully. Will Monsieur de Voltaire take the trouble of stepping into the coach?—no, not this one, that one over there. The person who wishes to speak to him is waiting inside.

As he puts his foot in the coach, men leap at him from behind, pin his arms to his sides, begin beating him. At the window of the other coach appears the Chevalier's face—he calls out nonchalantly the warning "not to hit him on the head—something good may yet come out of it."

Again the little Arouet has gone and "got himself caned." When he breaks loose and rushes back into the dining room laughter instead of sympathy. The Duke of Sully shakes his head when asked to give evidence that will send the Chevalier to prison for the assault. Voltaire leaves his house never to enter it again.

Who will back him in his attempt to bring his cowardly enemy to justice? No one. Captain Beauregard—yes, he had been able to get *him* locked up for a few weeks, but even that had cost money and trouble. The Rohan family is far too powerful for anyone to be willing to take sides against it with a poet. The Duke of Sully likes Voltaire but blood ties connect him with the Rohans—the Chevalier is his cousin. If Voltaire's head

was spared in the caning it is bruised enough now as he dashes it futilely against this barrier of birth.

In the opinion of his noble friends he has received only what was coming to him. Great poet he may be, but he must learn not to be so flip with his social superiors.

The Church dignitaries are openly delighted. "We should be unhappy indeed if poets had no shoulders!" It is the portly Bishop of Blois speaking. The bishop has no use—none whatsoever—for poets who make it their business to muck-rake in church history.

If the notary is dead, old Mathew Marais is well equal to the task of crying, I told you so!, in his place. He writes in his diary—

"The poor Beaten shows himself as often as he can at court, and in the city; but no one pities him, and those whom he thought to be his friends have turned their backs on him. The rumor runs that the poet Roy has also had his basting for an epigram. And so, at last, behold our poets, through fear of the stick, reduced to their legitimate work of learning and pleasing!"

Voltaire, our merry little Voltaire who is such good company when he does not forget he is only a poet—what, wonder his noble friends, has become of him? Four months have passed and he has disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. Where can he be?

Hérault, the lieutenant of police, knows, but he is not telling anybody. His detectives, however, have their instructions.

Certain feelings akin to remorse trouble the nobles when they reflect that their jester may have taken his caning—this new verb, also, so much in vogue now, *voltairiser,* meaning to *voltaire,* or to *beat*—seriously enough to have done away with himself.

In a quiet out-of-the-way house on the Rue St. Martin a queer little man very much alive skips about in his stockinged feet waving a rapier. He does not look like a fighter, but

his lips are tightly clenched, his eyes savage—he lunges and parries with a vigor extraordinary in a man of so puny a build. It is Voltaire taking fencing lessons.

"He is living in very bad company," reports the lieutenant of police to the minister in charge of the Department of Paris. "Several times during the last six weeks he has changed both his residence and his quarter. We have information that he is in relations with some soldiers of the guards, and that several bullies frequent his lodgings. It is certain that he has very bad designs."

Yes, bad designs indeed. Legal justice denied him, Voltaire intends to cut out the Chevalier's heart with his own hand. For once the man of thought has cast aside words as useless and taken up the sword. His only regret now as he jumps around to the orders of the professional cutthroats who are coaching him is—not that of his father, why did he not go into a profession?—but why did he not take up fencing earlier?

But rage at the humiliation to which he has been subjected gives him strength. Suddenly he reappears in his usual haunts. At the opera, where the trouble started, he has planned to demand from Rohan that satisfaction which under the existing code of honor he believes himself entitled to.

Again the box of Adrienne Lecouvreur. The Chevalier inside indecently still forcing his attentions. Suddenly, enter, this time Voltaire!

"Monsieur, if some affair of interest has not made you forget the outrage of which I have to complain, I hope that you will give me satisfaction for it!"

No capers of the tongue on this occasion, but all done strictly according to the rules. The Chevalier accepts the challenge. He names time and place—St. Martin's gate, tomorrow at nine.

But before morning comes Voltaire has been arrested on a *lettre de cachet* procured by the Rohan family, which the lieutenant of police has been waiting to serve on him, and is again in the Bastille.

* * * * * * * * * *

At last realization!

Solid, unyielding, as the grim walls which surround him now, is this barrier which he in his young optimism had fancied non-existent to genius. That democracy of the intellect where poets and princes mingle as comrades—it does not exist in France.

But France—is France the world? Voltaire's thoughts rush to Aristotle who tutored Alexander the Great, to Cicero who was Roman consul. Perhaps, in some other land . . . ?

To the minister in charge of the Department of Paris the prisoner writes—

"The Sieur de Voltaire very humbly represents that he was assaulted by the brave Chevalier de Rohan, assisted by six ham-stringers, behind whom the Chevalier was boldly posted; that ever since he has constantly sought to repair, not his own honor, but that of the Chevalier, which has proved too difficult . . . He requests permission to go at once to England!"

Does he mean it? An easy way to get rid of the little trouble-maker, thinks the minister,—if he really goes. Condé, the chief turnkey of the Bastille, is instructed "to accompany him as far as Calais, and to see him embark and set sail from that port."

So, after fifteen days imprisonment, Voltaire is free to go into exile. But before he goes, he leaves a farewell to the intolerance which is driving him away, in the form of an innocent question to the lieutenant of police—

"What is done with people who forge lettres de cachet?"

"They are hanged."

"It is always well done—" then the flash, "*—in anticipation of the time when those who sign genuine ones shall be served the same way!*"

VIII

Glimpses of Voltaire in England . . .

Landing at Greenwich on the day of the Fair, also the anniversary of the king's birthday. Voltaire has been sick in body

and spirit on the journey across. But his eyes are agog with interest as he views the royal water pageant.

In Dorsetshire, at the great country house of Bubb Dodington, shocking the literati here assembled by presuming to debunk Milton. To Voltaire much of Paradise Lost—the duels between angels and fallen spirits, the mountains they throw at each other, the great conference of devils in a hall—is simply slapstick comedy. He is too much the realist not to be amused instead of impressed by the picture of Sin and Death sitting gossiping in Hell, the former commencing their dialogue with "O son, why sit we here each other viewing?"—The mocking little Frenchman mocked himself in an epigram—

> "You are so witty, profligate, and thin,
> At once we think you Milton, Death, and Sin!"

At the home of the Popes. A singular couple indeed, this pair of poets, foremost of their day—the wicked French mummy, and the tiny spider-like English cripple who has to be lifted out of bed, and cannot stand until laced in a sort of armor, who, as he describes himself "has been taken at a distance for a small windmill!" Voltaire, forgetting he is in England, tells a gay story. Mrs. Pope claps her hands to her ears and hurries from the room.

Chased by a London rabble. The frog-eating Frenchman, the rabble's "natural enemy," mounts a doorstep. "Brave Englishmen," he pleads, with his tongue in his cheek, "am I not already unhappy enough in not having been born among you?"

A spectator of Newton's impressive funeral. What—a lord chancellor, dukes and earls, acting as pall-bearers? A scientist buried with kings in Westminster Abbey! Could this happen in France?

Calling to pay his respects to Congreve. The famous old dramatist rudely interrupts Voltaire's compliments with the request that he be considered simply an English gentleman. A polite bow from Voltaire— "If you had the misfortune of be-

ing that and only that I should not have taken the trouble to come and see you."

In a boat on the Thames. Sturdy British sailor, nourished on liberty, declares with an oath he would rather be a Thames boatman than a French archbishop. Not long afterwards, when in company of another Frenchman, Voltaire sees strange sight of same boatmen begging alms from between prison bars. The boatman has been impressed for service in his Majesty's navy, and is now chained by his feet to keep him from running away before the ship sails. Compatriot frankly delighted—how about being a French archbishop now, boatman? Voltaire's thoughts —is there no liberty anywhere?

The famous visit to the Quaker, best seen as written up by Voltaire himself—

"The Quaker was an old man of fresh complexion, who had never been sick, because he had always been continent and temperate. In my life I have never seen a presence more noble or more engaging. He was dressed, like all those of his persuasion, in a coat without plaits at the sides, or buttons on the pockets and sleeves, and wore a broad-brimmed hat like those of our ecclesiastics. He received me with his hat on, and advanced towards me without making the least inclination of his body; but there was more politeness in the open and humane expression of his countenance than there is in our custom of drawing one leg behind the other and carrying in the hand what was made to cover the head.

" 'Friend,' said he to me, 'I see that thou art a stranger; if I can be of any use to thee, thou hast only to speak.'—'Sir,' said I to him, with a bow and a step forward, according to our custom, 'I flatter myself that my reasonable curiosity will not displease you, and that you will be willing to do me the honor to instruct me in your religion.'

" 'The people of thy country,' he replied, 'make too many compliments and bows, but I have never before seen one of

them who had the same curiosity as thou. Come in and take dinner with me.'

"I still kept paying him bad compliments, because a man cannot all at once lay aside his habits; and, after a wholesome and frugal repast, which began and ended with a prayer to God, I began to question my host.

"I began with the question which good Catholics have put more than once to the Huguenots: 'My dear sir,' said I, 'have you been baptized?'—'No,' replied the Quaker, 'nor my brethren either.'

" 'How! Morbleu! you are not Christians, then?'—'My friend,' he mildly rejoined, 'swear not. We do not think that Christianity consists in sprinkling water upon the head with a little salt.'

" 'Bon Dieu!' said I, shocked at this impiety; 'have you forgotten, then, that Jesus Christ was baptized by John?'—'Friend, once more, no oaths,' replied the benign Quaker. 'Christ received baptism from John, but he baptized no one. We are not John's disciples, but Christ's.'—'Ah!' cried I, 'how you would be burned by the Holy Inquisition! In the name of God, my dear sir, let me have you baptized!'

" 'Art thou circumcised?' he asked. I replied that I had not that honor.

" 'Very well, friend,' said he, 'thou art a Christian without being circumcised, and I without being baptized.' "

Voltaire was in England three years. He had thought of going here because the island had offered a refuge to the French Huguenots, because he had heard many rumors of its greater tolerance. During the period of his exile he made one, perhaps two, secret trips back across the Channel, staying in France a few weeks.

Horace Walpole, English ambassador at the French court, gave him letters of introduction to prominent Whigs. Bolingbroke, the Tory, was back in England. Thus the great houses

of both parties were open to him. He knew scarcely any English, but French was the language of the English court, and there was a large colony of French refugees in London.

He studied English at the home of an importer from the Orient named Falkener, met casually at Greenwich Fair, and who became his closest friend while in England. (Voltaire, always quick with compliments, predicts that his amiable host will some day be ambassador to Turkey.) He met Pope, Swift, Congreve, Young, Gay, Chesterfield and every other man of literary note. He talked with Newton's niece, and obtained from her the story of Newton and the apple which he will be the first to put into print. He was friendly with the old Duchess of Marlborough who gave him material about her dead husband and the War of the Spanish Succession which he could use in his history of Louis XIV's reign.

On the island he wrote an essay upon the French civil wars, a history of the recently killed adventurer-king, Charles XII of Sweden, a play *Brutus* inspired by Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar,* sketched another play *The Death of Cæsar,* translated the *Henriade* into English, studied the writings of the English philosophers Locke, Bacon and Berkeley, studied Newton's *Principia,* studied Shakespeare, Pope, Congreve, Addison, Milton, Swift—even the minor English poets, Oldham, Roscommon, Dorset, Sheffield, Halifax and Rochester—from all of whom, in drama, social satire, and versifying, his genius would borrow, founded a stock company of French actors in London, and got into shape for publication his revolutionary "English Letters," which were to shake up France to a realization of how far behind England it was in religious and political tolerance.

But homesick, ah! how homesick he became! The climate disagreed with him. He missed the petting of great ladies. He missed the gaiety of the Latin temperament. Intellectual interests might keep him busy but he felt he was among strangers. He longed to be back in the land of his birth.

His sister died while he was in England. The one person to

whom he was now bound by close family ties, his brother Armand, had approved of his arrest and exile, and still wrote him pompous letters advising him to mend his ways. Nothing connected with his exile rankles in Voltaire's mind more than this attitude taken by his brother. "By all sorts of methods," he writes to Thieriot, "I have tried to soften the pedantic clownishness and insolent egotism with which he has overwhelmed me during these two years past. I confess to you, in the bitterness of my heart, that his insupportable conduct toward me has been one of my keenest afflictions!"

Also England was not the Utopia that he meant to make it appear to French eyes. He saw plenty of misery there. He knew about the atrocious exploitation of Ireland—it was while he was in England that Swift wrote his dreadful satire, *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country,* the solution being that the starving Irish children should be bought and eaten by the rich English landlords. With the exception of Everard Falkener he made no close friends. He sensed the racial antipathy to himself, seen as an effusive little foreigner given over-much to self-advertising.

But he saw how he could capitalize his exile in England if he was ever able to return to France. His rôle would be that of a genius to whom foreign countries were quick to pay homage. If a French king had forced him to publish his *Henriade* surreptitiously, an English queen had gladly accepted its dedication, and the poem had been openly applauded. He would shame his countrymen further by dwelling on the honors paid to intellect in England, as opposed to the French persecution, emphasize the material rewards—how Addison by his pen had risen to one of the highest offices of the State, how Steele's essays had made him Commissioner of Stamps and given him a place in Parliament, how Locke had been a Commissioner of Appeals, and Newton Master of the Mint.

English justice, English tolerance, English recognition of genius—all these he would paint in bright and alluring colors.

The other side of the picture—the side which showed birth, and flattery, and the influence of women by no means unimportant factors of success in this Utopia—he would leave blank for the time being.

Only later, when he had no reason for holding anything back, would he allow himself such postscripts to the Letters as—

"In my youth I believed that Newton had made his fortune by his extreme merit. I imagined that the Court and the city of London had named him by acclamation Master of the Mint. Not at all. Isaac Newton had a niece, sufficiently amiable, named Madame Conduit, who was very pleasing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Infinitesimal calculus and gravitation would have availed nothing without a pretty niece."

IX

"Write no more to your wandering friend, for at an early moment you will see him appear. Prepare to come at the first summons."

Voltaire, under an assumed name, is homeward bound. The formal order of his exile is still in force but he means to take a chance. He rents a room in a wig-maker's house at St. Germain, appropriately situated opposite a monastery, and sends to friend Thieriot the uninviting invitation to come here and "ask for Monsieur *Sansons*. He inhabits a hole in this barrack, and there is another for you."

For several weeks he remains incognito, frequently changing his address. But his noble friends have missed him. They come to see him privately and he tells them funny stories about the Quakers. They use their influence at Court—result a royal warrant annulling order of exile.

He is back, and allowed to stay, but from now on he must behave himself. The lieutenant of police sends for him to give him a friendly warning. Besides watching his tongue he must watch his pen also.

Voltaire, incredulously, as though he does not know what the lieutenant of police is driving at— "But I write nothing, I print nothing, which can render me liable to censure or pursuit on the part of the government!"

Hérault likes Voltaire. But he has heard rumors of strange heresies which the exile has brought back with him from England. He eyes curiously the frail little figure of the poet— suddenly, leaning forward, says frankly—

"Whatever you may write, you will never succeed in destroying the Christian religion."

Voltaire, quietly,— "We shall see."

Does he really mean it, thinks the lieutenant of police. Mentally he contrasts Voltaire, the one small sickly man, with the powerful organization of the Church. If he does, thinks Hérault, struggling between admiration and pity, then it is because he knows not the strength of his enemy.

X

Two things the Voltaire of twenty-eight had set out to get —money and power. The Voltaire of thirty-six has already the nucleus of his fortune.

Including a money present from George II, his English printings of the *Henriade* had brought him between five and ten thousand dollars. Soon after returning from England he came into full possession of his inheritance. He had passed his thirty-fifth year, the age mentioned in his father's will, and M. de Nicolai, in whose eyes the English profits offset the Rohan episode, handed over to him his patrimony. This was not as slender as the notary in his will had modestly made it out to be. Besides property there was money coming to Voltaire. Arouet, as guarantee that he would not decamp with the large royal sums handled by him in his business capacity, had deposited with the Chamber of Accounts fifty thousand dollars, seventeen thousand of which were now returned to Voltaire as his share.

Soon after his return he was able, also, to greatly increase this capital by his first large and successful speculation. The French Controller-General, to liquidate a part of the public debt, had hit on the brilliant scheme of a government lottery, so stupidly planned that anyone who bought up all the tickets would make a million francs. A mathematician, named La Condamine, pointed out this slight error in the Controller-General's calculations at a supper-party, when Voltaire happened to be one of the guests. His demonstration was accepted as empty theorizing. Only Voltaire was willing to believe that the mathematician knew what he was talking about when he analyzed the lottery. He hurried away, formed a company, bought up all the tickets, demanded the prizes, and came out of the deal richer by fifty thousand dollars.

But power—this he is still in quest of. Not in England had he found the royal friend he dreams of. George II gave money to poets as he would to buffoons. Queen Caroline had accepted his dedication of the *Henriade,* but she was not deeply interested in Voltaire. Again Voltaire plays the courtier. This time his object of attack is Cardinal Fleury, Louis XV's new minister. Again little success, the Cardinal showing no signs of wishing to take Voltaire in partnership governing France.

Indefatigably he writes, talks, amuses, schemes. Brings pressure of English reputation to bear until permission to publish the *Henriade,* expurgated, is granted, after a fashion, M. Chauvelin, Master of Requests, and M. Hérault, Lieutenant of Police, stretching their authority with the understanding that should higher-ups make trouble they will come down promptly on the new edition. Permission to publish history of Charles XII is also received, then suddenly withdrawn when twenty-six hundred copies are already printed—the history is considered too much a satire on personal misgovernment, further some bishops who have read the manuscript see no sense at all in such lines as "In that country, as elsewhere, there are disputes upon religion; the greatest quarrel being upon the question whether the laity ought to make the sign of the cross with

two fingers or with three." To Rouen, to arrange for secret publication. Back to Paris with a new play *Eriphile,* which fails. Voltaire's friends advise him to stop writing drama. His answer, *Zaire!* After fourteen years the success of the *Œdipus* more than repeated. *Zaire* becomes immediately a public favorite, and is performed before the king and queen at Fontainebleau.

A glimpse of Voltaire at Court, (where he is superintending the production of *Zaire*), seen through the opera-glass of Alexis Piron, rival playwright, who stands at a window corner in the gallery, looking down on the crowds—

"There is nothing genuine here," writes Peron, "but the faces of the Swiss guards, the only philosophers of the Court. With their halberds upon their shoulders, their big moustaches, and their tranquil air, one would say that they regarded all these hungry fortune-hunters as people who are running after what they, poor Swiss as they are, obtained long ago . . . Speaking of that, it was with a sufficiently Swiss expression that I watched, very much at my ease, yesterday, Voltaire, bustling about like a little green pea among the crowds of foolish people who amused me."

XI

The Swiss guards—Voltaire bustling about like a little green pea—"Ah, Monsieur Duke, one word! . . . Monseigneur, a minute of your time! . . ."—A poet-sycophant seeking favors? Yes, but behind the bustling and bowing what?

Little does Alexis Piron guess that the little green pea bobbing from duke to prince, from prince to cardinal, would appear, seen through another kind of opera-glass, a bomb, of which the time-fuse is already set. That right now, this rival, viewed complacently as struggling to reach his own level, is preparing to publish the book destined more than any other to bring about that spiritual revolution in France which will lead to the fall of the Bastille . . . to the slaughter of the suc-

cessors to these same tranquil, big-moustached mercenaries . . . to the guillotine . . . the Republic.

Voltaire's *Philosophical or English Letters*—great indeed was to be their influence upon the mind of eighteenth century France! The boy-noble, Lafayette, reading them, will become a republican. They will awaken the slumbering genius of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Throughout the kingdom they will be read and re-read for half a century—until at last in '89 they bear fruit.

The Letters by painting the picture of a neighboring Utopia made Frenchmen desirous of changing their own country into another such happy land. They were Voltaire's first big drive against the despotism of Church and King. They reflected his own hatred of war, religious persecution, exploitation of the poor by the rich.

But what chance that he would receive the royal permission to publish when they contained such passages as the following—

"No doubt the establishment of liberty in England has been costly; it is in seas of blood that the idol of despotic power has been drowned; but the English do not think that they have paid too high a price for their laws."

When such dangerous comparisons were made as—

"You do not in England hear of one kind of justice for the higher class, a second for the middle, and a third for the lowest; nor of the right to pursue game on the land of a citizen who is not allowed to fire a shot in his own fields. Because he is a nobleman or an ecclesiastic, an Englishman is not exempt from paying certain taxes; all imposts are regulated by the House of Commons, which though only second in dignity, is first in authority . . . The peasant's feet are not lacerated by wooden shoes; he eats wheaten bread; he is well clad; he is not afraid to increase the number of his cattle, or to cover

his room with tiles, lest his taxes should be raised the year afterwards."

When the industrious English business man like Falkener was placed higher in the social scale than the idle French noble—

"In France, whoever pleases is a marquis, and whoever arrives in Paris from the depths of the provinces, with money to spend and a name ending in 'ac' or 'ille' may talk of 'a man like me,' 'a man of my quality,' and look down with sovereign disdain on a trader. The trader himself hears so often his vocation spoken of contemptuously that he is foolish enough to blush for it. Yet I know not which is the most useful to a state, a carefully-powdered nobleman who can tell at what hour precisely the king gets up, at what hour he goes to bed, and who gives himself the airs of a great man while performing the part of a slave in the ante-chamber of a minister; or a trader, who enriches his country, gives from his desk orders for Surat and Cairo, and contributes to the welfare of the world."

When the man of thought was acclaimed as greater than the man with the sword—

"A distinguished company were discussing who was the greatest man, Cæsar, Alexander, Tamerlane or Cromwell. Somebody answered that it was undoubtedly Isaac Newton. This person was right for if true greatness consists in having received from heaven a powerful understanding and in using it to enlighten oneself and all others, then such an one as Newton, who is hardly to be met with once in ten centuries, is in truth a great man. It is to him who masters our minds by the force of truth, not to those who enslave men by violence; it is to him who understands the universe, not to those who disfigure it, that we owe our allegiance."

Nay, when Army and Church are attacked in the same breath by a Quaker suspiciously like Voltaire in disguise! We do not go to war, says the Quaker, not because we are afraid of death, but because we are not wolves, or tigers, but Christian men—then adds,

"Our God, who has bidden us love our enemies and suffer evil without complaint, assuredly has no mind that we should cross the sea to go and cut the throats of our brothers, because murderers in red clothes and hats two feet high enlist citizens, making a noise with two little sticks on an ass's skin tightly stretched."

Why this craze for reform, ask Voltaire's friends. Is he not satisfied with the success of *Zaire?* If he must accuse, let him at least pour his accusations into the mould of his inimitable verse. These Letters, despite the Voltairean touches, are in too serious a vein. Let him above all quit his dangerous baiting of the Church.

But two concrete instances of the harm done by religion make Voltaire turn a deaf ear to their advice. The first is the Church denial of Christian burial to Adrienne Lecouvreur, who dies at this time. Can he forget that Sarah Oldham, the English actress, who had never possessed the genius of the brilliant young Frenchwoman, dead at twenty-eight, had been mourned by a nation and buried in Westminster Abbey like Newton when she died while he visited England? Besides writing his poem, he unsuccessfully tries to persuade the Paris actors to go on strike until they are no longer treated as moral outcasts by these impostors in gowns who do not hesitate to give the last sacrament to kings' mistresses. Threatened with imprisonment, he has to leave Paris for a short time, until the anger of the priests dies down.

The second is the Convulsionist epidemic. A fanatical Jansenist deacon named Pâris, who has killed himself with self-torture, has become a Saint. Crowds of similar fanatics flock

to the cemetery where he is buried to throw convulsions and mutilate themselves. Miraculous cures of disease are superstitiously supposed to be effected by praying on the deacon's tomb. From all over France the sick travel to it as a Mecca.

Voltaire is a witness to the gruesome scenes that take place daily in this cemetery where men and women by the hundred sometimes throw fits, swallow broken glass and burning coals, beat and crucify each other, under the delusion that they are achieving health and holiness. There is no more ardent believer in the miracles that his own brother Armand. And it is Armand he has in mind years later when in his "Philosophical Dictionary" he writes under the article-heading of fanaticism—

"When once fanaticism has gangrened a brain, the malady is almost incurable. I have seen convulsionists who, in speaking of the miracles of Saint Pâris, grew warm by degrees; their eyes flashed fire; their whole body trembled; their fury distorted their countenances; and they would have killed anyone who had contradicted them. Yes; I have seen those convulsionists. I have seen them twist their limbs, and foam at the mouth. They cried, 'We must have blood!' "

XII

Chop and change them though he does to worm a way through the censorship, much as he courts the favor of Cardinal Fleury, Voltaire's English Letters remain in manuscript. He sends Thieriot to England to get out an English edition.

A vacancy occurs in the Academy. Can he, perhaps, elected one of the Forty, overcome the opposition? He intrigues for the king's nomination, and thinks he has it, when suddenly his "For and Against" breaks mysteriously into print. For ten years he has had it lying around in manuscript, afraid to publish. An enemy has copied the poem, which appears, not anonymously, but with Voltaire's name on the title page.

"What do you think of it?" D'Aguesseau, the Chancellor of France, asks his secretary, Langlois.

"Monseigneur," answers the secretary, who has also seen the unpublished English Letters, "Voltaire ought to be shut up in a place where he could have neither pen, ink, nor paper. That man, by the bent of his mind, can destroy a state."

No hope now of sitting in the empty Academy seat. The Archbishop of Paris complains formally to the Lieutenant of Police. Hérault summons Voltaire. The latter resorts to what from now on will be one of his favorite methods of evading persecution. He says he never wrote the poem. Who did, then? Well, he thinks he remembers hearing the Abbé Chaulieu—now dead—recite it. How about the name on the title page? That is the work of a jealous rival, or priest plotting his ruin.

He writes the *Temple of Taste,* burlesquing in rhyme, as had Pope in the *Dunciad,* all his personal enemies—not excepting J. B. Rousseau, who had panned *Zaire* and was now actively doing his bit to send Voltaire to prison. To divert attention from the "For and Against," and increase his popularity with theatre-goers, he writes a new play *Adelaide du Guesclin,* which flops. He sends frequent frantic warnings to his Rouen printer, Jore, secretly printing a French edition of the Letters, not to let a single copy get out. Voltaire's strength is failing from overwork and worry. He dreads going to prison. "I am sick," he writes to his friend D'Argental, "and close air would kill me!"

To another friend, Formont, in April of this year 1734, when he has turned forty Voltaire writes—

"The Letters philosophical, political, critical, heretical, and diabolical are going off in London, in English, with great success. But then the English are Pope-scorners, cursed of God. The Gallican church, I fear, will be a little harder to please. Jore has promised me a fidelity proof against every temptation. I do not yet know if there has been some little breach in his virtue. He is strongly suspected in Paris of having sold some copies."

In May the storm bursts. As Voltaire had feared, the copies imprudently sold by Jore have fallen into enemy hands. The printer is sent to the Bastille, the whole edition confiscated. The English Letters are publicly burned by the Paris executioner as "scandalous, contrary to religion, to morality, and to respect due to authority!" Another *lettre de cachet* is launched against Voltaire.

Voltaire was out of town functioning as best man at the quiet country wedding of his friend the Duke of Richelieu when news reached him that the royal warrant was on its way. He discreetly retired across the border to Lorraine, not yet French territory.

But he has no mind to stay in exile. Where in France will be safe? Now begins his sixteen year relationship with the Marquise du Châtelet.

She is the daughter of that Baron de Breteuil to whom he had written when convalescing from his attack of smallpox. She is twenty-eight, married, the mother of three children. Her husband an army officer who leads his own life, and allows her to lead hers. A tall, mannishly-built woman, with fine eyes and forehead, rich black hair, and a very amiable expression. She has had several lovers, the last being the Duke of Richelieu, the French Don Juan of his generation.

Madame du Châtelet's main interest is mathematics. She has read that part of the *Letters* in which Voltaire introduces to France the great Englishman, Newton. She admires Voltaire's mind, and he hers. Now, when he is looking around for some safe place to live, she offers him a possible refuge.

Her husband owns a château in Champagne, near the border. It is old—dates back to the thirteenth century. No one has lived there for years. If Voltaire will lend the Marquis forty thousand francs for repairs he can make his home here.

Voltaire accepts. Goes to Cirey to start putting the château in order. Meanwhile lady-friends at Court use their influence

with ministers to keep the royal warrant from following him into the provinces. Madame du Deffand, the Princesse de Conti, the Duchesse du Maine, the Duchesse de Villars, the Duchesse de Richelieu, are among those busy—Madame du Châtelet, whose father had been introducer of ambassadors to Louis XIV, and who has the right of *tambour,* or privilege of sitting on a stool in the queen's presence, also does her utmost.

"They say I must retract," writes Voltaire from the country to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. "Very willingly. I will declare that if St. Luke and St. Mark contradict one another it is a proof of the truth of religion to those who know well how to take things; that another lively proof of religion is that it is unintelligible. I will swear that all priests are gentle and disinterested; that Jesuits are honest people; that monks are neither proud, nor given to intrigue, nor malodorous; that the holy inquisition is the triumph of humanity and tolerance. In a word, I will say all that may be desired of me, provided they will leave me in repose, and not indulge the mania to persecute a man who has never done harm to any one, who lives in retirement, and who knows no other ambition but that of paying court to you."

Not enough. For the *lettre de cachet* to be cancelled he must disavow the *Letters* completely. Voltaire disavows.

. . . . . .

At Cirey, besides superintending the masons and carpenters, Voltaire is not forgetting to get acquainted with lady-neighbors. "I take the liberty of sending you a boar's head," he writes to the Countess de Neuville. "This gentleman has just been assassinated, in order to give me an opportunity of paying my court to you. I sent for a buck but none could be found. This boar was destined to give you his head. I swear to you that I think very little of the head of a wild pig, and I believe it is only eaten from vanity. If I had taken nothing but a lark, however, I should have offered it to you, all the same." The Countess sends him in return a basket of peaches.

XIII

The disavowal brings results. In March of the next year comes the following communication from friend Hérault—

"His Eminence and Monsieur the Keeper of the Seals have charged me, monsieur, to inform you that you are at liberty to return to Paris whenever you think proper. This permission is given on condition that you will occupy yourself here with objects which shall afford no grounds for complaint against you, like those of the past. The more talent you have, monsieur, the more you ought to feel that you have enemies, and jealous competitors. Shut their mouths, then, forever, by a course of conduct worthy of a wise man and of a man who has now reached a certain age."

The sardonic smile leaps to Voltaire's lips. Still the desire to pigeon-hole him as an entertainer. Now a new argument—he is old enough to know better.

But the smile fades. If only he had been born a king, instead of an obscure little notary's son! If only he were a king's minister! Disheartened he wonders if this power he craves will ever come to him. Already he has passed into middle age.

Work—work to occupy his mind, and hold back broodings. He begins his seven *Discourses on Man,* his *Treatise on Metaphysics.* He writes to his friends clamoring for more materials for his projected history of the Grand Monarch's reign, restating his aims in a letter to Thieriot. "When I asked you for anecdotes upon the Age of Louis, it was less upon the king himself than the arts which flourished in his reign. I should prefer details relating to Racine and Boileau, to Quinault, Sully, Molière, Lebrun, Poussin, Descartes, and others, than to the battle of Steinkerque. Nothing but a name remains of those who commanded battalions and fleets; nothing results to the human race from a hundred battles gained; but the great men of whom I have spoken prepared pure and durable delights for

generations unborn. A canal that connects two seas, a picture by Poussin, a beautiful tragedy, a discovered truth, are things a thousand times more precious than all the annals of the court, than all the narratives of war. You know that with me great men rank first; heroes last. *I call great men all those who have excelled in the useful or the agreeable. The ravagers of provinces are mere heroes.*"

He writes another play, *Alzire, or The Americans.* It is timely, the French Academy of Sciences having recently sent an expedition to Peru to find out the exact shape of the earth by measuring an arc of the meridian. When it repeats the successes of the *Œdipus* and *Zaire,* Voltaire has it published in book form with an introduction containing the lines, "The religion of a barbarian consists in offering to his gods the blood of his enemies. An ill-instructed Christian is often little more reasonable."

He writes *The Worldling,* a poem burlesquing the "good old times" idea, particularly the biblical story of the Garden of Eden where the parents of the human race lived happily on fruit and nuts until the snake implanted in their minds the thirst for knowledge, and expressing a decided personal preference for modern life with its comforts and luxuries.

He teaches Madame du Châtelet English, and designs a laboratory-annex to the chateau. He makes plans to write a popular, but scientifically accurate, account of Newton's discoveries, minus the Latin and the algebra. Cirey, which lies just north of the famous wine district, is in a land of forges and iron mines. Voltaire visits the forges with a view to making some experiments of his own.

"We must have all imaginable modes of intellectual life," he answers the friends who advise him to stick to his poetry, "open all the doors of our souls to all the sciences and all the sentiments. Provided they do not enter pell-mell, there is room within us for every one of them."

He would venerate Newton the more, he adds, if the great scientist had written some vaudevilles for the London stage. Was it not the one-track nature of Newton's mind which had

made him such a believer in the Bible, write those nonsensical commentaries on the Apocalypse?

Meanwhile he is always the practical business man. He has made money speculating in the public funds of the Duke of Lorraine. He owns a part interest in a ship which trades between Marseilles and the Mediterranean ports of Spain, Portugal and Africa. He has a share in the contract for feeding the French army sent to lift the king's father-in-law Stanislas back on the throne of Poland. Voltaire's business agent in Paris is appropriately one of those "undefinable beings, neither clerical nor secular, whom we call abbés," commented upon him as a species unknown in England. The Abbé Moussinot collects Voltaire's pensions, buys and sells pictures for him, invests his money as directed, much of it in the paper of the iniquitous farmers-general which pays six per cent., and makes loans to the Villars, the Richelieus, the Guises, and other noble friends, on life-annuities which Voltaire does not hesitate to point out are excellent investments since, on account of his bad health, he may die at any moment.

Now and again comes a moment of real delight. Voltaire hears that Falkener has been knighted, has been appointed ambassador to Constantinople. "My dear friend!" he hastens to write to the Englishman, "Remember I am the first man who did foretell the honor you enjoy. If you pass through France on your way to Constantinople, I advise you I am but twenty leagues from Calais, almost in the road to Paris. The castle is called Cirey, four miles from Vassy en Champagne on Saint-Dizier's road, and eight miles from Saint-Dizier. The post goes thither. There lives a young lady called the Marquise du Châtelet, whom I have taught English to, and who longs to see you. You will come here, if you remember your friend."

Falkener goes from England to Turkey by sea, so does not come to Cirey. But Voltaire, pleased as a child that his casual prophecy has come true, picks up the proofs of his English translation of *Zaire,* about to be published in England, and

dedicates the edition to "M. Falkener, English Merchant; since Ambassador at Constantinople."

XIV

Arrives a pathetic letter from printer Jore, still in the Bastille. He will be let out, he says, and have his license restored, if Voltaire will do just the opposite of what two years ago he was asked to do—that is, give in writing a confession that he wrote the English Letters.

Madame du Châtelet advises strongly against doing so. It will be something to hold over Voltaire's head in the future. But pity is a stronger feeling than caution with Voltaire. Has he not been himself in the Bastille? He writes the confession requested, and sends it to the printer.

From the released Jore another letter, in a very different tone. He demands to be paid the cost of the confiscated edition, fourteen hundred francs.

Indignantly Voltaire denies the justice of the claim. Was not Jore himself responsible for the government raid? Two more seats in the Academy had fallen vacant, and Voltaire intended shortly to go to Paris to try for one of them—now he hurriedly leaves Cirey for the capital. In Jore's veiled threats he detects the voice of his enemies—the printer has become a puppet with priests pulling the strings. Still he is sorry for him, wants to help him get on his feet again. He offers Jore half what he asks for.

Jore brings suit. Desfontaines, editor of a literary journal hostile to Voltaire, plays up his side of the story. A feature article appears giving all the details of Voltaire's business relationship with the Rouen printer, these details of a nature to prove Voltaire a villain and Jore his unhappy victim.

Even the lieutenant of police recoils from such ingratitude. For once he uses his authority, as he thinks, in favor of Voltaire instead of against him. Jore's claim disallowed. But Voltaire must give him five hundred francs as charity.

Voltaire balks. In vain his friends urge him to settle out of court as he has been ordered to do. Will he not realize that the quarrel is too small, too sordid, for the fuss it is making, that public opinion has been worked up against him, that he is putting himself in the light of a rich man persecuting a poor one? No, he is still obstinate. "It is to sign my shame," he declares. "I would rather go on with the suit than pay!" It is not the money he cares about. It is the coercion, which compels him to pay the five hundred francs.

Little good it does him now as he returns to Cirey, having finally paid, with public opinion still strongly against him, and the two Academy chairs assigned to other candidates, that in two years Jore will confess he was the tool of Voltaire's enemies. Then Voltaire will be generous and grant to the printer a pension as long as he lives, but now his thoughts are bitter.

Had he been born a noble would he have been *forced* to pay Jore the five hundred francs? Must he always be the target of this persecution which follows him even into a trivial business affair? Will his mind never be free to act directly upon the minds of other men? Oh, if only in this modern world there lived some philosopher-king who would call Voltaire friend!

XV

A fortnight later he is reading a letter the arrival of which is perhaps the greatest single event in the life of Voltaire. The letter is long. It is dated August 8, 1736. It reads—

"Sir,

"Although I have not the satisfaction of knowing you personally, you are none the less known to me by your works. They are treasures of the mind, if the expression may be allowed, and compositions, elaborated with so much taste, delicacy, and art, that their beauties appear new each time they are reread. I feel I have discovered in them the character of their ingenious author, who does honor to our age and to the

human mind. The great men of modern times will one day be obliged to you, and to you alone, if the dispute concerning the relative greatness of the ancients and the moderns should again arise; because you will incline the balance to their side.

"To the quality of an excellent poet you add an infinity of other knowledge which indeed has some affinity with poetry but has only been fitted to it by your pen. Never before has a poet made metaphysical thought rhythmic; you were the first for whom that honor was reserved. That taste for philosophy which you display in your writings encourages me to send you a translation of M. Wolff, the most celebrated philosopher of our days, who has been cruelly accused of irreligion and atheism because he carried light into the most shadowy recesses of metaphysics and because he treated this difficult subject in a manner as elevated as it was clear and precise. Such is the destiny of great men: Their superior genius ever leaves them naked to the poisoned darts of calumny and envy.

"I am now having translated a *Treatise on God, the Soul and the World,* which emanates from the pen of the same author. It shall be sent you, sir, as soon as it is finished, and I am sure you will be struck by the force of evidence in all its propositions, which follow each other geometrically and are connected together like the links of a chain.

"The kindness and support you exhibit towards all who devote themselves to the arts and sciences make me hope that you will not exclude me from the number of those whom you find worthy of your instruction. I mean your correspondence; which cannot but be profitable to every thinking being. Without aspersing the deserts of others, I dare to assert that the whole world cannot show a person to whom you could not act as master. Without overwhelming you with an incense unworthy to be offered you, I may yet say that I find numberless beauties in your works. Your *Henriade* charms me and triumphs happily over the injudicious criticisms which have been made of it. The tragedy of *Cæsar* shows us sustained

characters; its sentiments are all magnificent and grand; and we realize that *Brutus* is either a Roman or an Englishman. *Alzire* adds to the graces of novelty the happy contrast between the manners of savages and of Europeans. Through the character of Gusman you show us that Christianity when misconceived and guided by false zeal renders men more barbarous and cruel than Paganism itself. If Corneille, the great Corneille, who attracted the admiration of his age, should come to life again in our days, he would see with astonishment and perhaps with envy that the goddess of Tragedy lavishes prodigally upon you those favors of which she was so sparing to him. What may we not expect from the author of so many masterpieces! What fresh wonders may not issue from the pen which designed so wittily and elegantly the Temple of Taste!

"This it is which makes me desire so ardently to possess all your works. I beg you to send them to me, sir, and to communicate them unreservedly. If among your manuscripts there should be any which, with necessary prudence, you think fit to hide from the public eye, I promise you to keep it secret and to content myself with applauding it in private. I know unfortunately that the faith of princes is little to be trusted in our days; yet I hope you will not allow yourself to be moved by general prejudices and that you will make an exception to the rule in my favor.

"In possessing your works I should think myself richer than in possessing all the transitory and contemptible gifts which are acquired and lost by a like chance. The first can be made our own—I mean your works—by the aid of memory, and remain ours as long as it does. Knowing the slight extent of my own memory I reflect long before choosing those things I consider worthy of being placed in it.

"If poetry were in the same condition as it was formerly, that is if poets could do nothing but hum over tedious idylls, eclogues cast in one mould and insipid stanzas, or if they could do nothing but raise their lyres to the tone of elegy, I

should renounce it for ever; but you ennoble this art, you show us new paths and roads unknown to the Lefrancs and the Rousseaus.

"Your poems possess qualities which render them respectable and worthy of the admiration and study of good men. They are a course of morality whereby we learn to think and to act. Virtue is painted there in its fairest colors. The idea of true glory is there defined; and you insinuate the taste for knowledge in a manner so fine and so delicate that he who has read your works breathes the ambition of following in your steps. How often have I said to myself: 'Wretched man! abandon this burden whose weight exceeds your strength; Voltaire cannot be imitated except by Voltaire himself!'

"At such moments I have realized that the advantage of birth and that vapor of grandeur with which vanity soothes us is of little service or, to speak truly, of none. These distinctions are foreign to ourselves and but embellish outwardly. How much more preferable are the talents of the mind! How much is due to men whom nature has distinguished by the mere fact that she has created them! She takes pleasure in creating some whom she endows with every capacity needed for the progress of the arts and sciences; it is for princes to reward their toils. Ah! may glory only make use of me to crown your successes! I should fear nothing except that this country is so infertile in laurels that it does not furnish as many as your works deserve.

"If I am not so favored by destiny as to take you now into my service, at least I may hope one day to see you, whom I have admired so long and from so far, and to assure you by word of mouth that I am, with all the esteem and consideration due to those who, following the torch of truth, devote their labors to the public good, Sir, your affectionate friend."

It is Voltaire's first letter from Frederick the Great!

PART THREE: *A Royal Hand*

I

FREDERICK was then Prince Royal of Prussia. He was twenty-four, Voltaire forty-two. His life had been a continuous revolt against his brutal father, Frederick William, Prussia's first king. A delicate dreaming child, he had been first despised, then hated, by the burly king who had longed for a son who would be a replica of himself—a he-man, who smoked endless pipes of tobacco, drank gallons of beer, knocked down women with his fists, and kicked the big grenadiers. Instead Frederick showed a passion for study.

He had a will of his own. He refused to grow up into the man his father wanted him to be. He wrote French verses, practised on the flute, and finally when he could endure life as heir to the Prussian throne no longer, made plans to run away. The attempt failed. The king, mad with fury, shouted that he was unworthy to wear the crown, and tried to have him executed. Shocked relatives dissuaded him from this, but Frederick was locked up and his accomplice, a young officer, beheaded under the window of his prison.

This awful revenge made the gentle prince shrink even more into himself though he seemed to give way to his father. If to obtain his freedom he consented to drill the grenadiers, to drink beer, to attend the long religious services which Frederick William considered an indispensable part of a prince-royal's education, and later, though in love with another woman, to marry a princess chosen by the king, his ideals had not changed. Why instead of a king's son had he not been born a poet?

As yet there existed no German literature. The Prince Royal had had a French tutor—frequently cuffed by the king—and

the books he read were mostly French books. One day there swam into his ken a new author. Eagerly he read all the books he could get written by this amazing Frenchman, and as he did so it seemed to the Prince Royal that he recognized a twin-soul. Everything that Voltaire hated he hated, everything that Voltaire loved he loved. Voltaire was Frederick born free instead of chained to a throne. Voltaire was himself moving in that world of thought which had always so allured the Prince Royal.

How true, to this prince who has suffered so much from it, rings the 'Voltairean indictment of intolerance! The protean mind of Voltaire, which reaches out hungrily in all directions for knowledge, is it not his own mind, glorified by genius? Poet, dramatist, philosopher, humanitarian, reformer—he too would be all this. Frederick traces the resemblance even further. Has he not heard that Voltaire, like himself, is small and sickly?

Voltaire became the Prince Royal's god. Gradually a human ambition replaced this worship. To know Voltaire, to correspond with him, to create between them one of those splendid antique friendships—this was now his dream. But timidity to put his desire into words, to send a letter to this man nearly twice his age who always expressed his own thoughts so clearly and vividly, held the Prince Royal back. At last he had plucked up courage to write.

II

Frederick William I, if a brutal father, had ruled ably. He had made no wars, but he had created a Prussian defense army scarcely second in size to those of France and Austria, and infinitely better disciplined. The letter received by Voltaire came from the son of a king whom all Europe had grown to fear.

A royal hand has reached down, brushed away the barrier, and unasked for, clasped his in friendship! The hand of a prince who will soon have at his command a hundred and fifty thousand of the best soldiers in Europe!

FREDERICK THE GREAT
(*after the painting by Pesne*)

Again and again Voltaire reads the letter. A little too much about M. Wolff in it, perhaps, but otherwise what homage paid to himself! The heir to the Prussian throne begs for his correspondence, exclaims "Ah! may glory only make use of me to crown your successes!" Is it a dream? What shall he put into his reply?

Voltaire's return letter to Frederick a long one also. But too historic as his first in this unique correspondence between poet and prince which numbers nearly seven hundred letters and is to last over a period of forty years, too revealing of the man Voltaire at this high moment of hope and joy, not to be given likewise in whole.

"Monseigneur,

"I should indeed be insensitive were I not infinitely touched by the letter with which your Royal Highness has been graciously pleased to honor me. My self-love was but too flattered; but that love of the human race which has always existed in my heart and which I dare to say determines my character, gave me a pleasure a thousand times purer when I saw that the world holds a prince who thinks like a man, a philosophical prince who will make men happy.

"Suffer me to tell you that there is no man on the earth who should not return thanks for the care you take in cultivating by sane philosophy a soul born to command. Be certain there have been no truly good kings except those who began like you, by educating themselves, by learning to know men, by loving the truth, by detesting persecution and superstition. Any prince who thinks in this way can bring back the golden age to his dominions. Why do so few kings seek out this advantage? You perceive the reason, Monseigneur; it is because almost all of them think more of royalty than of humanity: you do precisely the opposite. If the tumult of affairs and the malignancy of men do not in time alter so divine a character, you will be adored by your people and admired by the whole world. Philosophers worthy of that name will fly to your dominions;

and, as celebrated artists crowd to that country where their art is most favored, men who think will press forward to surround your throne.

"The illustrious Queen Christina left her kingdom to seek the arts; reign, Monseigneur, and let the arts come to seek you.

"May you never be disgusted from the sciences by the quarrels of learned men! From those circumstances which you were graciously pleased to inform me of, Monseigneur, you see that most of them are men like courtiers themselves. They are sometimes as greedy, as intriguing, as treacherous, as cruel; and the only difference between the pests of the court and the pests of the school is that the latter are the more ridiculous.

"It is very sad for humanity that those who term themselves the messengers of Heaven's command, the interpreters of the Divinity, in a word theologians, are sometimes the most dangerous of all; that some of them are as pernicious to society as they are obscure in their ideas and that their souls are inflated with bitterness and pride in proportion as they are empty of truths. For the sake of a sophism they would trouble the earth and would persuade all kings to avenge with fire and steel the honor of an argument *in ferio* or *in barbara.*

"Every thinking being not of their opinion is an atheist; and every king who does not favor them will be damned. You know, Monseigneur, that the best one can do is to leave to themselves these pretended teachers and real enemies of the human race. Their words, when unheeded, are lost in the air like wind; but if the weight of authority is lent them, this wind acquires a force which sometimes overthrows the throne itself.

"I see, Monseigneur, with the joy of a heart filled with love of the public good, the immense distance you set between men who seek the truth in peace and those who would make war for words they do not understand. I see that Newton, Leibnitz, Bayle, Locke, those elevated minds, so enlightened, so gentle, have nourished your spirit and that you reject other pretended nourishment which you find poisoned or without substance.

"I cannot sufficiently thank your Royal Highness for your kindness in sending me the little book about M. Wolff. I look upon his metaphysical ideas as things which do honor to the human mind. They are flashes in the midst of a dark night; and that, I think, is all we can hope of metaphysics. It seems improbable that the first principles of things will ever be thoroughly known. The mice living in a few little holes of an immense building do not know if the building is eternal, who is the architect, or why the architect built it. They try to preserve their lives, to people their holes, and to escape the destructive animals which pursue them. We are the mice; and the divine architect who built the universe has not yet, so far as I know, told His secret to any of us. If any man can pretend to have guessed accurately, it is M. Wolff. He may be combated, but he must be esteemed; his philosophy is far from being pernicious; is there anything more beautiful and more true than to say, as he does, that men should be just even if they are so unfortunate as to be atheists?

"The protection you appear to give, Monseigneur, to this learned man, is a proof of the accuracy of your mind and of the humanity of your sentiments.

"You have the kindness, Monseigneur, to promise that you will send me the *Treatise on God, the Soul and the World.* What a present, Monseigneur, and what an interchange! The heir of a monarchy deigns to send instruction from the heart of his palace to a solitary! Be graciously pleased to send me this present, Monseigneur; my extreme love of truth is the one thing which makes me worthy of it. Most princes fear to listen to the truth, but you will teach it.

"As to the verses you speak of—you think as wisely of this art as in everything else. Verses which do not teach men new and moving truths do not deserve to be read. You perceive that there is nothing more contemptible than for a man to spend his life in rhyming worn-out commonplaces which do not deserve the name of thoughts. If there is anything viler it is to be nothing but a satirical poet and to write only to decry

others. Such poets are to Parnassus what those doctors, who know nothing but words and intrigue against those who write things, are to the schools.

"If the *Henriade* did not displease your Royal Highness I must thank that love of truth, that horror which my poem inspires for the factious, for persecutors, for the superstitious, for tyrants and for rebels. It is the work of an honest man; and should find grace in the eyes of a philosophic prince.

"You command me to send you my other work; I shall obey you, Monseigneur; you shall be my judge, you shall stand to me in lieu of the public. I will submit to you what I have attempted in philosophy; your instruction shall be my reward: it is a prize which few sovereigns can give. I am certain of your secrecy; your virtue must be equal to your knowledge.

"I should consider it a most valuable privilege to wait upon your Royal Highness. We go to Rome to see churches, pictures, ruins and bas-reliefs. A prince like yourself is far more deserving of a journey; it is a more marvellous rarity. But friendship, which holds me in my retreat, does not permit me to leave it. Doubtless you think like Julian, that calumniated great man, who said that friends should always be preferred to kings.

"In whatever corner of the world I end my life, be certain, Monseigneur, that I shall constantly wish you well, and in doing so wish the happiness of a nation. My heart will be among your subjects; your fame will ever be dear to me. I shall wish that you may always be like yourself and that other kings may be like you. I am with deep respect, your Royal Highness's most humble, etc.

"VOLTAIRE."

A letter in which it will be noted that Voltaire does not yet take the liberty of signing himself as affectionately as had Frederick.

III

Now he can forget his worries and disappointments! At last his genius has been acclaimed by a man who will some day be a power in that world of action which he, the thinker, is so anxious to enter so that he can put his multitudinous ideas into practice.

What dreams, what hopes! The little Arouet, notary's son, who has had to fight so hard for recognition in his own country, who has had to flatter and amuse people he despised every step of his upward climb, who has been beaten by a spy and by a noble's servants, some day the minister of a great king? The woman he is living with—does she already sense the coming struggle?

Madame du Châtelet is now at Cirey with Voltaire. She is intellectual, but a woman of strong passions also. Her love will always be more demanding, more jealous, than his. She does not wish to share Voltaire even with a king.

They settle down to a routine of hard work. Sometimes the Marquis is at the château, mostly he is away with his regiment. If he suspects that the relationship between his wife and Voltaire is not purely an intellectual one he says nothing. As long as the affair is managed discreetly he does not care. The Marquis is an outdoor man, who eats heartily, and likes to go gunning. When at the château he is seldom seen except at mealtimes. He spends his time shooting partridges or visiting the forges and farms that he owns in the neighborhood. Now and again he borrows some money from his guest.

For many months Voltaire's passion is science. He has fallen under the spell of Newton. "That strange man has turned my head," he writes to his friends. His laboratory annex is finished and he fills it with apparatus purchased for him in Paris by the Abbé Moussinot—an air pump, furnaces, thermometers, a telescope and a microscope. He has a dark chamber and prisms to break up a beam of light as Newton had done. Devoured by

curiosity he makes other experiments in physics and chemistry, Madame du Châtelet helping him. At night they take out the telescope and look at the stars.

The French Academy of Sciences offers a prize for original research which will help to clear up the mystery of the nature and propagation of fire. Voltaire decides to compete. At the Marquis's forges he has the workmen weigh masses of iron up to a ton first red-hot then at different temperatures as they cool; he almost anticipates Priestley in the discovery of oxygen by concluding that the increased weight of the iron on cooling must come from the absorption of something which the air contains. He mixes liquids of different temperatures and discovers that the resultant temperature is not a mean of those put together. He has the trees in a part of the château woods cut down and fires started on quiet and on windy days to see how fast the flames travel among the fallen trunks under different atmospheric conditions.

Madame du Châtelet becomes also a competitor for the prize, taking Voltaire's data and interpreting this her own way. Though neither wins the prize their essays are ranked among the first five submitted. In all his experiments Voltaire is as painstaking a scientist as he is a poet. Had his bent been towards science from early youth, and towards this alone, with his prodigious powers of work what discoveries might he not have made during his long life?

But gradually he resumes his more varied labors. He corrects his old plays, writes new ones, goes on with his project of popularizing Newton and his history of Louis XIV's age, revises his English Letters. Meanwhile persecution does not cease. His *Worldling*, sent to a few friends, falls into the hands of the enemy, bringing the threat of arrest because, as he complains when fleeing to Holland for a few weeks, "to speak of Adam as having long nails has been made a crime, and treated seriously as heresy!" The Abbé Desfontaines is libeling him so villainously in Paris that Voltaire has to take legal action against him.

But what are such troubles when every month, sometimes oftener, comes a letter from the Prince Royal? Voltaire, now too, signs himself "affectionate friend." He sends Frederick reports of his experiments, Frederick, making similar ones at his Rheinsberg château where he lives the life of a student, replies in kind. Frederick, at first timidly, sends Voltaire verses of his own composition—Voltaire corrects them and sends them back. Voltaire when he returns from Holland starts in circulation rumors that he has gone to England, to Africa, to China, others that he has suddenly seen the error of his ways and become a monk—he even shams death to further mystify his enemies. Can he help seeing life as a glorious adventure when he has these letters of Frederick to show . . . when a messenger from Frederick brings to Cirey a portrait of the prince for Voltaire, an amber writing desk for Madame du Châtelet, and a twenty-page letter . . . when he knows that Frederick has written to the French ambassador at his father's court asking him to make known to Louis's minister, Cardinal Fleury, how deeply he sympathizes with Voltaire in his fight with the Abbé Desfontaines . . . when his name is everywhere coupled now with that of the Prince Royal of Prussia . . . when Frederick has been heard to exclaim—

"If ever I visit France the first thing I shall ask will be—Where is Monsieur de Voltaire?"

IV

Thus three years pass. Three of Voltaire's happiest years. But not entirely free from discord. Madame du Châtelet, his "divine Emilie," has had moments when her jealousy of Frederick becomes apparent.

In Prussia the royal hand has been beckoning. "If I desire anything with ardor, it is to have learned and able men around me—Leave your ungrateful country and come to a land where you will be adored!" She has heard rumors of the Prince Royal's aversion to women. Though she too corresponds with

Frederick, she detects the reluctance with which he includes her in the friendship.

In the spring of 1739 they leave Cirey for Brussels, a hundred and fifty miles away. The Marquis had recently inherited some land in Flanders, near Brussels, an inheritance which had also increased his prospects of winning a lawsuit of long standing in the family. Voltaire's business experience was now to be pressed into service for the purpose of obtaining a favorable decision. Frederick, who knew the Prince of Orange and the Prince d'Aremberg, both powerful in the Low Countries, had promised to do what he could to speed up the slow Austrian judges.

Madame du Châtelet takes her tutor in mathematics, Koenig, along, and the Marquis is also one of the company. At Brussels law, literature and mathematics keep them busy. Voltaire makes a trip to Paris to submit two new plays to the actors. Frederick in his letters tells of the tower he has built at his Remusberg château in imitation of Voltaire's annex at Cirey, but on a larger scale—the first story a grotto, the second his laboratory, the third a printing-office, and the roof an observatory.

He tells also of his ambition to publish a de luxe edition of Voltaire's *Henriade*. When Voltaire consents the Prince Royal imports from England a font of silver-faced type, sets Berlin artists and engravers to work making vignettes and illustrations. "Whatever the cost, we shall produce a masterpiece worthy of the poem which it will present to the public!" He himself writes the introduction, so extravagant in its praise that even the author asks him to tone it down a little. But the Prince Royal refuses to moderate his admiration—he ranks the *Henriade* above the *Æneid*, and the *Iliad*, in fact above all epic poems ever written, and insists on telling the world so in his introduction.

There is another project which Frederick writes to Voltaire about. The Prince Royal wants to break into print with a kind of prose sequel to the *Henriade*, to be called the "Anti-

Machiavelli." In it, he aims, one by one, to demolish the maxims of Machiavelli commending despotism in kings. The *Anti-Machiavelli* will, in particular, denounce the crime of war.

Voltaire praises enthusiastically this maiden effort of his pupil. Frederick sends him chapters as they are finished, then a copy of the completed book. As Voltaire turns the pages, Madame du Châtelet notices tears in his eyes. There are lines, indeed, in this little book, which written by the Prince Royal of Prussia, whose father is known to be dying, may well touch the little Frenchman's heart.

"How monstrous, how absurd, the attempt to render one's self illustrious through making others miserable! . . . Barbarous kings who prefer the fatal glory of conquerors to that won by kindness, justice, clemency, and all the virtues! . . . The new conquests of a sovereign do not render the states more opulent which he already possesses; his subjects gain nothing; and he deludes himself if he imagines he will be more happy. . . . It is not the magnitude of the country a prince governs which constitutes his glory! . . ."

Voltaire stares into the fire over which he is huddled. And for a moment the soul of the man seems to shine luminous in the large eyes. That terrible mockery which is his only weapon against bigots and tyrants has been laid aside—it is a dreamer who sits watching the flames. Voltaire does not believe this is the best of all possible worlds, but he does believe that human effort can make it better than it is. At last, through this prince, soon to be king, and whose counsellor he is, are his labors to bear fruit?

Frederick William I lingers on. Perhaps he will recover from his illness. No, he dies on the last day of May, and the Prince Royal ascends the throne of Prussia as Frederick II. A letter comes to Voltaire, dated June 6th, 1740, and from Charlottenbourg.

"My dear friend,

"My lot is changed, I have witnessed the last moments of a

king, his agony, his death. On coming to the throne, I had no need of that lesson to be disgusted with the vanity of human grandeur. . . . I beg you will see in me nothing but a zealous citizen, a rather sceptical philosopher, and a really faithful friend. For God's sake, write to me always as a man, and, like me, scorn titles, names and all exterior pomp. . . . Goodbye, my dear Voltaire; if I live, I shall see you, and see you this year. Continue to love me, and always be sincere with your friend."

Overwhelmed as he is by work the King has not forgotten to write to Voltaire in the first week of his reign! Eagerly Voltaire inquires what are Frederick's plans. "If your lot is changed, your noble soul is not!"

But in answer to this letter, comes another from the new king of Prussia, three weeks later. Frederick encloses a Berlin gazette in which Voltaire will find the official news. He tells how he has established a new college for commerce and manufactures, how he has engaged painters and sculptors, how he has laid the foundations of a Prussian Academy. But there is one curious sentence in this account of the work that has occupied him night and day since his father's death—

"I began by increasing the forces of the state by sixteen battalions, five squadrons of hussars, and a squadron of bodyguards."

V

Three months after becoming king, Frederick, on a tour of inspection through Prussia, was approaching the Flanders border. It was his first chance to meet Voltaire. But in Madame du Châtelet he was not interested. "To speak frankly, it is you, my friend, whom I desire to see; and the divine Emilie, with all her divinity, is only the accessory of the Newtonized Apollo. . . . If I can see you alone, I should prefer it."

Can Voltaire forget that it was this woman, whom he could see plainly now that Frederick disliked, who had offered him a refuge in the days before he began to correspond with the Prince Royal? His sense of loyalty was far too strong for him

to allow even a king to now push her into the background. He refused to cross the border and go to meet Frederick unless the King would write Madame du Châtelet a letter inviting them both.

Frederick changes his plans. Now he says that he will visit them incognito in Brussels. Emilie radiates joy. She bustles around preparing for the King's reception. She is filled with hope that when they meet she will be able to overcome Frederick's dislike for women, and make him her friend.

She has only one doubt. Frederick, in his letter, had mentioned that he was not feeling well, and might possibly for this reason not be able to come. Now arrives another letter saying he is in bed with the ague and cannot undertake the long journey—will Voltaire, alone, come to meet him at Cleves, eighty miles from Brussels? "Make my excuses to the marchioness for my not having the satisfaction of seeing her at Brussels. All who come near me know what my intention was, and that it was only the fever that could have made me change it."

Stormy scenes in Brussels. Madame du Châtelet is in tears at the way she has been tricked. She is sure that the King's ague is a fiction invented to keep him from meeting her. She heaps reproaches on Voltaire for suggesting that Frederick's story may be true. But Voltaire is devoured by curiosity to see the King. At last, when he promises only to be away a few days she lets him go.

On a cold Sunday evening in September—September 11th, 1740—takes place the historic meeting between Voltaire and Frederick, the first meeting between the greatest thinker of the age and the man destined to become its greatest general.

Voltaire has sat shivering in his carriage all the way. But the warmth which his body lacks is more than compensated for by the mental glow of expectation. The castle of Moyland, where Frederick is staying, looms up suddenly. At the gate is a single soldier standing guard. Within the court an old man is walking up and down blowing on his fingers—he hurries

forward and introduces himself as privy councilor Rambouet.

He conducts Voltaire to the rooms occupied by the King. They are bare, unfurnished. The light of a single candle gives a glimpse into a small side-room. On a cot here Voltaire sees a little man wrapped up in a dressing gown of blue cloth . . . shaking convulsively. Voltaire bows . . . then as the councilor whispers that the King is in the throes of a fit of ague goes to the side of the cot and "began our acquaintance by feeling the King's pulse, as if I had been his first physician."

The fit passes. They look at each other. So this is Frederick! —and this Voltaire!

Frederick with blue eyes and chestnut hair—yes, he looks like his portrait, but older. The candlelight throws shadows into his cheeks. His eyes show the strain of work. But his smile—how sweet it is!

Voltaire, so thin that the very air-currents flickering the candle seem to make him quiver. His fleshless face like a death-mask. The large nose made monstrous by the candlelight. But in the eyes what vitality gleaming, what beauty!

Each sees the other through a mist of romance. When the King begins to talk Voltaire is charmed by his low musical voice. In Voltaire's first words Frederick hears the ringing tones of the man who has dared to challenge the mightiest forces in Europe.

Frederick soon feels well enough to dress and come to the supper table. At the table sit three other friends of the King, all of whom Voltaire knows—ungainly, flat-nosed Maupertuis, who used to be Madame du Châtelet's tutor in mathematics, and of whom he had often written to the Prince Royal, the good-looking Algarotti who has translated Newton into Italian and who had visited Voltaire at Cirey, the gallant young noble Count Kaiserling who had been the Prince Royal's messenger—all of them now in the service of the king of Prussia. Frederick leads the conversation. It ranges from the immortality of the soul, and free-will, to the androgynes of Plato.

Three days and nights Voltaire stays at the castle. Frederick

asks his advice on almost every subject. He anticipates years of peace, and means to make Berlin a German Paris. He explains to Voltaire that he has only increased his army to make Prussia safe from attack. All his energies are going to be bent towards making his people happy and prosperous and converting Berlin into a great intellectual center, with an Academy, library, theatre, opera, and picture galleries.

He accompanies Voltaire to his bedroom at night and sits talking to him alone. Under the spell of the King's charm Voltaire agrees not to return right away to Madame du Châtelet, but to go on to the Hague where the *Anti-Machiavelli* is being printed, and superintend its publication. He agrees also to meet Frederick shortly at Remusberg so that he may be shown the new tower.

They part, each to write in glowing terms of the other. Frederick—

"I have seen that Voltaire whom I was so curious to know. He has the eloquence of Cicero, the sweetness of Pliny, and the wisdom of Agrippa; in a word he unites in himself the virtues and talents of the three greatest men of antiquity. His mind works without ceasing; every drop of ink is a gleam of wit darted from his pen. He declaimed 'Mahomet I' to us, a new tragedy of his, and he transported us out of ourselves; I could only admire and be silent. The Du Châtelet is fortunate indeed to have him; for out of the good things he utters at random a person who had no gift but memory might make a brilliant book!"

Voltaire—

"I saw one of the most amiable men in the world, who forgets that he is a king the moment he is among friends, and so completely forgets it that he made me forget it also, so that I had to make an effort of memory to recollect that I saw seated upon the foot of my bed a sovereign who had an army of a hundred thousand men. His ruling passions are to be just and to please. But if he should ever betray such grand professions, if he is not worthy of himself, if he is not always a Marcus

Aurelius, a Trojan, and a Titus, I shall lament it, and love him no more."

VI

A month goes by . . . The *Anti-Machiavelli* is off the press . . . Voltaire has sent a copy to Cardinal Fleury, that Louis's minister may hear his own hatred of war echoed by the king of Prussia. The volume does not bear the name of its author but he knows the Cardinal has heard of Frederick's book.

Voltaire is now negotiating in behalf of Frederick with a troupe of French actors which the King wants to import from France to Berlin. He is also hunting for ballet dancers.

In Vienna, a monarch, over-fond of mushrooms, eats too many of them one night. A letter from Frederick, dated October 26th, comes to Voltaire—

"The emperor is dead.

"His death alters all my pacific ideas, and I think that in June it will be rather a matter of cannon-powder, soldiers, and trenches than of actresses, of balls and stages."

The King no longer wants either the actors or the ballet dancers—Voltaire is to consider their engagement cancelled.

Rumors of regiments on the march in Prussia. What does the young king intend to do? The eyes of all Europe are turned to Frederick. Will he keep the peace? Or is he going to make war on the young woman of twenty-three who is now Empress of Germany?

The European powers have promised the dead Emperor Charles VI to recognize his daughter Maria Theresa as ruler of the scattered empire. Now they stand around each afraid that the other will break this promise and profit by seizing a part of the young queen's dominions.

Who, if not Voltaire, can find out Frederick's intentions? He writes to Cardinal Fleury telling of the appointment he has with Frederick at Remusberg. He assures the old Cardinal that the king of Prussia has no secrets where he is concerned. It

is unbelievable that the author of the *Anti-Machiavelli* should contemplate precipitating Europe into another general war, but whatever the plans of Frederick something of them will surely come out in his conversations with Voltaire.

The Cardinal, who sees at last a real chance to use Voltaire, applauds the suggestion. Madame du Châtelet sees an opportunity here for Voltaire to become a personage at the French court. She knows how he longs for power. What better way to counteract the desire of the King of Prussia to "possess" Voltaire, as he has put it in one of his letters, than to induce the French ministry to offer Voltaire a more brilliant future than any Frederick can promise? When Voltaire leaves for Remusberg she goes to Fontainebleau with this object in view.

Is Voltaire troubled by any scruples as he sets out on this second visit to Frederick? No, for certain lines in the King's recent letters have brought doubts. Doubts which he tries to reject, but which return again and again to torment him. These Prussian troop movements, what do they mean? Is Frederick about to betray his grand professions—had he never intended they should stand up under the test of action? In this case it seems to Voltaire that he is justified in undertaking this secret diplomatic mission. If not, it can do no harm.

But during his six days' stay at Remusberg his fears are lulled to rest. Frederick makes light of the serious tone employed in his letter announcing the emperor's death. The rumors of mobilization are only what might be expected at this crisis from a Europe which has long looked askance at the big Prussian grenadiers. Did his father ever make war? Like Frederick William he is only taking precautions against possible attack. Surely Voltaire should know well enough his pupil's ideas on war and peace.

Six days of merry-making . . . Banquets and balls . . . Every evening a concert . . . Frederick performs on his flute. . . . His ague is gone—thanks, he says, to Voltaire who had recommended quinine at Moyland. He takes Voltaire through

his tower, and talks science. Voltaire reads to him more from *Fanaticism, or Mahomet the Prophet.* Only one thing seems to displease the King slightly. He wishes Voltaire had not sent that copy of the *Anti-Machiavelli* to Cardinal Fleury. But he explains this by saying that he writes only for his own amusement and that of his friends.

In Paris Madame du Châtelet is working tirelessly in Voltaire's behalf. She makes the ministry realize what a loss it would be to France if Voltaire, its greatest genius, should be persuaded by Frederick to leave France permanently for Prussia. She smooths away all the obstacles created by his writings. She obtains a promise that the next vacant seat in the Academy will go to him. So sure is she now that he need no longer fear persecution, but will be welcomed in Paris, that she buys a house in the capital. At last, having over-stayed her time, she hurries back to Brussels, expecting to find Voltaire already here. He has not returned.

Frederick had wanted him to see Berlin and Potsdam. Here, as at Remusberg, life is a continual round of gaieties. Voltaire writes to Fleury confirming his belief that Frederick intends to respect the claims of Maria Theresa. Then he sets out on the return journey, going by way of the Hague, where he has business to do for Frederick. From the Hague to Brussels he travels by boat, which is caught in the ice, delaying his return still further. Instead of being gone two weeks he has been gone eight.

No sooner is he in Brussels than news comes that Frederick has invaded Silesia!

The waiting for Voltaire to return, the way she has been slighted by Frederick, the realization that all she has just done for her lover at the French court will be swept away by the false reports he has sent to the Cardinal, bring rushing to the surface Madame du Châtelet's suppressed resentment against Frederick. "I defy the King of Prussia," she exclaims furiously, "to hate me more than I have hated him these two months past!"

What can Voltaire say? Crushed in spirit he sits waiting—waiting for a letter from Frederick.

It comes. Dated the 23rd December, *Headquarters at Herrendorf in Silesia.* It tells how for two weeks Frederick has been marching with his troops from seven in the morning until four in the afternoon, that is why he has not been able to write sooner. It details briefly how busy he is feeding his army, keeping the soldiers from pillaging, grappling with a thousand little daily difficulties as they arise—

"Such are my occupations, which I would gladly make over to another if that phantom called Glory did not appear to me too often. Indeed, it is a great folly, but a folly too difficult to banish when once we dote on it!"

The letter drops from Voltaire's hands. He shivers. That fire of his genius which alone keeps him alive seems suddenly to have gone out, and the cold winter to have rushed into the wretched shell of his body. Silent and forlorn he sits for a long while staring into space. At last he says sadly,

"After all he is only a king!"

VII

But the fund of hope in Voltaire was too inexhaustible for him to despair long. He remembered that Frederick was only twenty-eight. However much the King might be carried away at the moment by the desire for glory, it was possible that his philosophical bent would assert itself later. Frederick having started the war, the vital question now was, What would be its outcome?

Emilie no longer heaps reproaches on her lover but is joyful in the thought that this experience has cured him of Frederick. "The King of Prussia," she says, "may take as many provinces as he likes if he does not take from me that which makes the happiness of my life." Voltaire replies that he would not go to Prussia now if the King made him a present of Silesia.

They go to Lille. Voltaire has two reasons for not producing his new play *Mahomet* at Paris. First the play, though cast in

the form of an attack upon the founder of a false religion, is in reality an equal attack upon fanatical Christians. Dare he risk it on a Paris stage with his misleading of Cardinal Fleury so recent? Secondly the players at Lille, fifty miles from Brussels, had been the ones he was negotiating with for Frederick. They are angry at the way the King of Prussia has suddenly changed his mind, and Voltaire, feeling himself partly responsible for their disappointment, offers them the play to make this less keen.

Lille, having once in the past been occupied by the Austrians, bears them no good will. The people, besides being flattered that they, two hundred miles from the capital, should be the first to see Voltaire's latest play, are impressed by the knowledge that he is the friend of the King of Prussia. If Frederick feels he has duties to Prussia, Voltaire feels he has equal duties to humanity. No bitterness against Frederick shall prevent him from capitalizing to the utmost his friendship with the King in order to carry on his fight against superstition and fanaticism. His one thought now is to have *Mahomet* a success.

The first act brings applause. The second even more. But the great moment of the night is still to come. While Voltaire is sitting in his box, waiting for the third act to begin, a despatch is handed to him. He turns pale. It is from Frederick. Then he rises, and to the tense, awe-struck audience announces that he has just received a message from the King of Prussia, dictated on the battlefield!

Slowly, in his clear ringing voice, he reads—

"They say the Austrians are in retreat, and I believe it is true!"

A moment of intense silence . . . then such a scene as the little Lille theatre, crowded to its utmost capacity, has never witnessed before and will never witness again. Voltaire himself is carried away by the mad enthusiasm of the audience. He stands looking out over the shouting faces, the waving hands, his eyes glittering with tears of pride . . . Frederick! Frederick! great even in war! . . .

. . . . . .

Frederick's victory at Mollwitz and his subsequent successes more than ever determined Voltaire to keep his hold on this king who had become the terror of Europe. To influence Frederick for good, to lead this great force away from channels of destruction into ones of creation, became his dominant ambition. And to accomplish this he turned his mockery on Frederick.

The King still hoped to some day bring Voltaire to Prussia. But since the emperor's death and his sudden resolve to widen the boundaries of Prussia by seizing Silesia Frederick had indeed changed greatly. He saw himself now as a Man of Destiny, Voltaire as an arm-chair philosopher. His victories on the battlefield widened this gulf between them. At the same time he wanted Voltaire's good opinion.

Bavaria, France and Saxony had followed his example and attacked Austria. England had sent an army to help Maria Theresa. Until Frederick, having taken what he wanted, gets out of the war temporarily by making a separate peace with Maria Theresa in July, 1742, the following dialogue occurs in their letters between the man of action and the man of thought—

Voltaire. I wonder and lament that the Solomon of the North should have become its Alexander!

Frederick. It is easy for you to declaim against those who support their rights by force of arms, but I remember a time when, if you had had an army it would have marched against Desfontaines, Rousseau, etc., etc.

Voltaire. Your Majesty should put laurel leaves in your hair like the ancient Roman generals.

Frederick. Would you like to bargain poetry for politics? The only similarity between them is that politicians and poets are the playthings of the public, and the object of their colleague's satire.

Voltaire. Confederacies to foresee, or to destroy, allies to make, or to retain, sieges, battles, every kind of plan, every sort of action, and all the details of a hero!

Frederick. You may be certain that the life I lead has neither changed my character nor my way of thinking.

Voltaire. I wonder if you are happier in all this clamor of glory than you were at Rheinsberg?

Frederick. I love Rheinsberg and its quiet days; but we must adapt ourselves to our station in life and make our duties a pleasure.

Voltaire. O most extraordinary of men! You win battles, you take provinces, you write music and verses, and all so quickly and easily. While I have been ill your Majesty has accomplished more great actions than I have endured fever fits.

Frederick. You think perhaps that I have not enough worries here and that I must in addition be troubled with your health.

Voltaire. I set only one foot on the banks of the Styx; but, Sire, I am most distressed by the number of poor wretches I saw pass over. Some came from Schärding, others from Prague or Iglau. Will you and the kings your colleagues never cease from ravaging this earth which, you say, you so much desire to make happy?

Frederick. You ask me how long my colleagues have agreed to ruin the earth: to this I answer that I have not the slightest knowledge, but that it is now the fashion to make war and that I presume it will last a long time.

Voltaire. Go on, Sire—but make at least as many people happy in this world as you will have taken out of it.

Frederick. I admire you as a philosopher but I like you much better as a poet.

Voltaire. We never dance except in peace . . . Sire, it is for you to dance.

Frederick. I hope that after I have made peace with my enemies I may make it in turn with you.

Voltaire. I have some hope that your Majesty will strengthen Europe as you have shaken it, and that my colleagues, the human race, will bless you after having admired you.

Frederick. The miseries and calamities which result from war are like the diseases of the human body. The last war may therefore be regarded as a slight fit of fever which seized Europe and left it almost immediately.

VIII

Meanwhile Voltaire was struggling to put on *Mahomet* in Paris. A minor obstacle at first presented itself in the person of a Turkish envoy visiting the French capital and being made much of here. "It would not be decent," Voltaire agreed, "to blacken the prophet while entertaining the ambassador," and he postponed the play's production until the Turk's departure. Then he received warnings that it would certainly be suppressed as he had lost Court favor. When Frederick withdrew from the war the risk became greater. Now his known friendship with the King of Prussia reacted against him. Frederick, from being admired, had become an object of hatred. Still he persisted, and August 19, 1742, more than a year after its success at Lille, the play had its first night at the Théâtre-Français.

Murmurs. The paid applauders and Voltaire's friends do their best but the clergy have come in force. These metropolitan men of God have no wisps of hay in their hair like their brothers at Lille. Their keen eyes experience no trouble at all in detecting the devil on the stage gliding in and out among the actors, swishing his tail, brandishing his cloven hoofs and thumbing his nose at their boxes. Their shrewd ears hear in the lines of the play perhaps an even closer satire on Christianity than Voltaire had intended. One old professor of theology (who should know what he is talking about) rushes out from the theatre at the very beginning muttering that he will not listen longer to this shameful burlesque of the Christian religion of which the very name *Mahomet* is a mockery since it contains three syllables "the same number as that of Jesus Christ!"

The Solicitor-General is informed. "I hear a comedy spoken of which, they say, contains enormous things against religion," he writes to Hérault.

The Lieutenant of Police has a copy of the play. He is no friend of the Church which is always giving him disagreeable work to do. *Mahomet,* which nowhere breathes a word openly against Christianity had seemed to him quite all right. Why should the priests object to a verbal onslaught on the Prophet when they used to be glad enough to send crusaders against his followers? He dispatches the copy to the Solicitor-General to let the latter see for himself that the play contains nothing to which the Church can logically take exception.

But the Solicitor-General is a man who takes both his religion and his position very seriously. He writes back shortly condemning *Mahomet,* and giving his very good reason for so doing—

"I need not tell you that I have not read a word of the play; but, judging from what I hear, I believe it is necessary to forbid its performance."

A courier gallops from the Lieutenant of Police to Versailles. Cardinal Fleury has not forgiven Voltaire for bungling his diplomatic mission, but he had seen fit nevertheless to let him produce *Mahomet.* If he has failed once he may still be of use in persuading Frederick to come back into the war. Besides the Cardinal had been sure of complaints, and he knew a sure way of stopping the play without himself condemning it—

"Suggest to the actors to assign the sickness of one of their number as a pretext for not playing the piece on Friday; also, advise Voltaire to withdraw the play from their hands, to avoid commotion. I even believe that you had better begin by the expedient last named, and that he will himself assist you to cover the proceedings. *Remind him of a certain decree of the parliament, by virtue of which it is in the power of the Solicitor-General to arraign the author of the English Letters—it will render your argument persuasive.*"

The sword which Voltaire had placed in the hands of the government when he wrote the confession pleaded for by the printer Jore is still hanging over his head. He withdraws the play—and promptly hits back at his persecutors with another tragedy, *Merope,* which he has been reserving for such emergency.

It is his greatest dramatic success. For the first time in the history of the French theatre an author is made to come out on the stage to be applauded. Voltaire's rival, Piron, and his enemy, Desfontaines, are seen at this moment, "to turn so white that they seem on the point of collapsing."

On the eve of the play's performance Cardinal Fleury had died. Beside being Louis's minister, he was also a member of the Academy. The unparalleled reception given *Merope* raised hopes in Voltaire that the chair left vacant might go to him.

He was to be disappointed. The Dauphin's tutor, the Bishop of Mirepoix, persuaded Louis to veto his election. Voltaire succeed a Cardinal! No, indeed. The Bishop naturally did not rest until Louis had given the chair to another bishop like himself.

IX

But if the sensual stupid Louis XV is indifferent to Voltaire, from Prussia that other royal hand, no longer clenched into a mailed fist, is again beckoning.

Frederick, having got what he wanted in territory, still wants Voltaire. He sympathizes with Voltaire over the suppression of *Mahomet,* and asks for a copy of the play. He is much impressed by what he hears of the tremendous triumph of *Merope.* He ridicules the Academy, speaking of the "forty learned parrots who sit upon the French Parnassus and dread to let in Voltaire!"

Voltaire forgets the past. They both make fun of the Dauphin's old tutor. The Bishop is accustomed to sign himself, officially, the *"anc.*[1] Bishop of Mirepoix." Voltaire changes

[1] Short for *ancien,* ancient, or venerable.

this to the *"ane* [1] Bishop of Mirepoix." He sees to it that some of Frederick's letters commenting on the donkey-bishop get into the Bishop's hands. Boyer goes wailing to Louis that Voltaire is advertising him in foreign courts as a fool. The King of France (as Voltaire reports) laughs, and assures the Bishop that he need not be upset about it as "this is *a thing agreed upon by everybody.*"

Somewhat of a breach of confidence on Voltaire's part, but both he and Frederick have brushed aside many illusions. Voltaire knows that the King of Prussia, in wanting him, is thinking mainly of his own glory. He means to use Frederick now as much as Frederick means to use him.

As far back indeed as Voltaire's second visit Frederick had been saying curious things about him. The King, economical by nature, had fancied Voltaire turned in too large an expense account for his trips to the Hague. Voltaire for his part though he knew the bill to be heavy reckoned in the fact that in editing and superintending the publication of the *Anti-Machiavelli* (a book which already at this time Frederick would have given a fortune not to have written) he had given the King at least six months of his time for nothing. Frederick paid the bill, but reluctantly. The emperor's sudden death, and his determination to grab Silesia, had made him regret also that he had ever invited the Frenchman to Remusberg. The gaieties here were all for the purpose of covering up the war-move he was about to make, and he disliked the idea of Voltaire arriving and asking questions.

"The miser," Frederick had written to his intimate friend Jordan, "will drink the dregs of his insatiable desire to enrich himself; he will have thirteen hundred crowns. His six days' visit will cost me five hundred and fifty crowns a day. This is paying a fool well. Never did the buffoon of a great lord have such wages!"

Was this an outburst regretted as soon as the letter was on

[1] Donkey.

its way? No, for soon afterwards the King had written again—

"The brain of the poet is as light as the style of his works, and I flatter myself that the attractiveness of Berlin will have power enough to make him return thither immediately, and the more since the purse of the Du Châtelet is not always as well furnished as mine." Voltaire having come to Prussia the King was resolved to keep him here. He had guessed Voltaire's secret, had Voltaire guessed his? When he moved he meant to move quickly, occupying Breslau before the rest of Europe was aware that his troops had left Prussia, and he wanted to be able to keep his eye on Voltaire in the meanwhile, and to lead his thoughts away from politics by continual entertainment. Hence the invitations to Berlin and Potsdam. Better still, if he could persuade Voltaire not to return to Brussels at all. His conviction that Voltaire could not resist the temptation of money made this seem possible. To Jordan he therefore added, "You will deliver to this man, extraordinary in everything, the letter inclosed, with a little compliment in the style of a knowing procuress." In this letter he offered Voltaire a fine house in Berlin, a large income, and complete freedom to write and do what he wanted, if he would stay in Prussia. Later he had repeated the offer in person, hinting at political opportunities, emphasizing his great affection for Voltaire, and trying to undermine his affection for the divine Emilie by ridicule . . . The royal hand was no longer beckoning from a distance, but rested on Voltaire's shoulder pressing gently . . . But Voltaire had gone.

From the boat, as he was leaving the Hague, he had written to Frederick—

"I abandon a great monarch who cultivates and honors an art which I idolize, and I go to join a person who reads nothing but metaphysics. I tear myself from the most amiable court in Europe for a lawsuit. But I did not leave your adorable court to sigh like an idiot at a woman's knees. Sire, that woman abandoned for me everything for which other women abandon

their friends. There is no sort of obligation which I am not under to her. The coiffure and the petticoat which she wears do not render the duties of gratitude less sacred. Love is often ridiculous; but pure friendship has rights more binding than a king's commands."

Frederick's lip curls contemptuously. He is not taken in by Voltaire's intimations that his relationship with the Madame du Châtelet is purely platonic, though he fails to realize that Voltaire's physical weakness, coupled with his preëminent absorption with things of the mind has in truth cast a shadow over his love-life. Now, two years later, it curls again when Voltaire to his urgings that he leave Madame du Châtelet and come to Prussia replies—

"Setting aside, Sire, heroism, throne, victories, all that imposes the most profound respect, I take the liberty, as you know, to love you with all my heart; but I should be unworthy of loving you to that extent and of being loved by your Majesty if for the sake of the greatest man of his age I should desert another great man who, it is true, wears a mob-cap, but whose heart is as masculine as yours and whose courageous and unshakable friendship during ten years imposes upon me the duty of living near her."

Pretense! Hypocrisy! Devoured by jealousy of this woman he has never seen and never will see, the King writes back—

"You protest because I think you have a passion for the Marquise du Châtelet; I thought I should deserve your thanks because I presumed to rate you so highly. The Marquise is handsome, amiable; you are inflammable, she has a heart; you have sentiments, she is not of marble; you have lived together for ten years. Would you have me believe that during all that time you have talked of nothing but philosophy to the most charming woman in France? My dear friend, be it said without displeasing you, you would in that case have played a very poor part. I did not think that pleasure was exiled from the temple of *Virtue* where you live. In any case, you have promised to sacrifice some of your days to me; and that is sufficient

for me. The more I think that to be absent from the Marquise costs you some effort, the more grateful I shall be to you. Be just to your friends. Sacrifice on the altars of Madame du Châtelet, but in your intercourse with the gods do not forget the men who esteem you, and grant them some of your moments."

It does no good. The King renews his tempting offers. In France, he says, only asses and idiots can make their fortune. Neither ridicule nor the jingling of money-bags makes Voltaire budge. And when he does come finally his visit instead of drawing them closer to each other only thrusts them farther apart.

X

"Has my hero received my letters from Paris in which I informed him that I was escaping to pay my court to him? I am waiting at the Hague, for your Humanity's orders and your Majesty's *vorspann.*"

Frederick is at Rheinsberg. At last then Voltaire is coming! Quickly the King replies—

"I am sending you with great eagerness the permit for the horses. You will not be driven behind Bucephaluses or Pegasuses; but I shall like them the more because they will bring Apollo to Berlin. You will be received with open arms, and I will provide you with the best establishment I can."

But Voltaire is not coming only to see Frederick. This June of 1743 the French armies are falling back everywhere before the attacks of the Austrians, the Hanoverians and the English. George II, king of Hanover as well as England, has come over from the island and is leading in person his continental troops and the English expeditionary force against the French. This war started by Frederick, and seen by him as nothing more than a slight fit of fever in the body politic of Europe, is by no means over—with intermissions it will last for the next twenty years, not only dragging in the whole of Europe but reaching out across the seas to India and America.

Frederick, out of the war for the time being—as he hoped for ever—had smiled to himself at the opportunity to fling back at Voltaire the latter's pacifist preachings. "If all France condemns me for having made peace," he had written, "Voltaire the philosopher will never let himself be carried away by numbers." But Voltaire had meant a general peace. That Frederick should smugly withdraw, making no effort to stop the bloody ball he had started rolling, and leaving France to her fate, horrified him. In a bitterly mocking tone he had answered, "I have always hoped for universal peace, as much as if I were the Abbé of Saint-Pierre's [1] bastard. But to make peace for oneself alone is the action of a king who loves his own dominions and throne only; this is not the way we philosophers think, for we hold that we must love the whole human race. The Abbé of Saint-Pierre will tell you, Sire, that to go to Heaven we must do good to the Chinese as well as to the inhabitants of Brandenburg and Silesia." Now Voltaire was leaving for Prussia to try and induce Frederick to come back into the war.

Had he succeeded on this mission that chance he so longed for to make practical reforms by becoming a political power in France might have been his. When Voltaire arrived in Prussia the French had just suffered the disastrous defeat at Dettingen. The eyes of France were now on their unofficial envoy. It was the great opportunity of Voltaire's life, one that he would never have again. If he could succeed in doing what the French ambassador had failed to do,—bring to the aid of France those hundred thousand Prussian soldiers so badly needed at this crisis—no reward would be too great for him.

But Voltaire found a Frederick who had no intention of talking politics. The King wanted a Voltaire who would amuse him, correct his French verses, and show him how to write plays, not a Voltaire who tried to make him commit himself to a definite line of political action. Though he stayed six weeks

[1] A well-known pacifist of the times greatly admired by Voltaire.

in Prussia he was able to extract from Frederick no promise of sending troops to the aid of France.

The King meanwhile was striving equally hard to separate Voltaire from Madame du Châtelet. He told how he wanted to make his capital the temple of great men, emphasized how liberally he would provide for all Voltaire's material wants, assured him that in Prussia he would "always be free, and entirely master of his destiny."

They fence back and forth. Make his mission successful, pleads Voltaire, and perhaps the French king will appoint him ambassador to Prussia. But Frederick does not want other kings to smile on Voltaire. He wishes to reserve to himself this privilege. He wants Voltaire to come to him as the only enlightened monarch in Europe—the king who gladly gives him a refuge when he can no longer endure his persecutions in France. Also he is given to understand that if Voltaire comes to the court of Prussia the Marquis and the Marquise du Châtelet must come too.

His passion to own Voltaire is so great that it does not stop at persuasion. He has the Donkey-Bishop to fall back on. To his confidential agent in Paris, the Count of Rottembourg, the King writes—

"Here you have a morsel of a letter of Voltaire's, which I beg you will get delivered to the Bishop of Mirepoix in some roundabout way, without either you or me appearing in the business. My intention is to embroil Voltaire so thoroughly in France that there will remain no part for him to take but to come to me." A week later he sends some verses of Voltaire, whose subject-matter is also the Donkey-Bishop, to Rottembourg, repeating his instructions. "I wish to embroil Voltaire forever with France; it would be the means of having him at Berlin."

Voltaire discovers what is going on. In these verses written for Frederick he had not only put long ears on the Bishop but had also if more guardedly put them on Louis XV himself. He cannot see the similarity between his having let the Bishop

read the satirical comments of Frederick—King of Prussia, and safe from persecution—and Frederick doing the same thing to him, a poet already twice in the Bastille, and probably due now for another visit. The King laughs. A joke for a joke, my dear Voltaire! To Rottembourg he writes, "Voltaire has unearthed, I know not how, the little treason we have played him. He is strangely piqued at it. He will get over it, I hope."

Voltaire is already fighting back. The King's very efforts to ruin him in France he endeavors to turn to his advantage. He writes to his friends at the French court—the Duke of Richelieu is now First Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber, and the older D'Argenson Minister of War—endeavoring to twist into compliments his ambiguous references to Louis's stupidity, and adding, "Not being able to gain me otherwise, the King of Prussia thought to acquire me by destroying me in France; but I swear to you that I would rather live in a town in Switzerland than enjoy at this price the perilous favor of a man capable of putting treason into friendship itself."

Frederick besides entertaining him in Prussia takes him to the court of his sister, the Margravine of Bayreuth, where Voltaire also meets the King's other sister Ulrique, soon to be Queen of Sweden. Never has the King made so much of Voltaire as now. But the one thing Voltaire wants him to do—send troops to the aid of France—he neither does, nor promises to do. Next year, frightened by the successes of the Austrians and English, by the possibility of Russia entering into an alliance with them, and by Maria Theresa's threats to take back Silesia, Frederick will come back into the war but he gives no sign of this intention now.

Voltaire returns to Paris. There trouble is in store for him. Madame du Châtelet had only let him go to Prussia as unofficial envoy when he promised to let the results of his mission pass to the French court through her hands; now Louis's mistress, the Duchesse de Châteauroux, turns a cold shoulder to him for having thus deprived her of what she considers one of her rights. Amelot, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who in-

clines favorably to Voltaire, is about to be dismissed in disgrace. The Donkey-Bishop has become a greater power than Voltaire imagined. Above all, where are the big Prussian grenadiers?

Again Voltaire's much advertised friendship with the King of Prussia has been put to a practical test and again it has failed to bring results. Instead of honors and opportunities his trip to Prussia brings him only unpopularity with everybody. Three more deaths in the Academy do not open its doors to him. His great political opportunity has gone forever. And it is Frederick—Frederick, his royal friend—who has made France less safe for him than it was before!

But there is one thing in which Voltaire can always forget his troubles—work. Again with Madame du Châtelet he goes to Cirey. Here Hénault, who had rescued the *Henriade,* visits them in the spring, and reports to his friends on leaving that he had seen, "Voltaire in bed, beginning, continuing, finishing works of all kinds."

XI

But the Voltaire seen by Hénault working so industriously in bed at Cirey, who smiles at his past misfortunes, and seems so content to spend the rest of his days here in the country managing the Marquis's estate and writing, is by no means as subdued as his friend thinks.

The fight, for him, is only beginning. He does not mean to let Frederick drive him out of France any more than he intends to let the priests do so.

It annoys him particularly that the Abbé Desfontaines, his bitterest enemy, should be a man who owes to him, Voltaire, his life. The Abbé, several years ago, had been accused of improper relations with a chimneysweep. The boy, it was said, having just finished a hard day's work cleaning the soot from a chimney in the Abbé's house, had been attacked by the Abbé as he crawled out of the fireplace. There was little doubt in

Voltaire's mind that the Abbé had misused the chimneysweep as reported, but that the Abbé should be burnt—at this time the punishment for such a crime in France—seemed to him terrible beyond words. It was Voltaire who, by interesting his noble friends in his behalf, had saved the Abbé Desfontaines from the stake.

Later a literary argument between them had turned the Abbé's gratitude to hatred and he had used his pen from then on to achieve the ruin of Voltaire.

Desfontaines's pen was only one among many busy always in Paris working to this end. Voltaire could not consider himself safe at Cirey. He had already published enough to send him to prison again any time his enemies thought the moment fit. His confession to the authorship of the English Letters was alone enough (as he had been several times informed) to send him to the Bastille. If he continued to attack the Church, as he had every intention of doing, there was no knowing when an arrest party might arrive at the château. Despite his previous failures, he determined, for his own protection, to try again at the first opportunity to make himself a personage at the French court.

The opportunity came sooner than he expected. The Dauphin was to be married to the Infanta of Spain. It devolved upon the new First Gentleman of the Bedchamber to arrange the marriage festival. Who could better help the Duke of Richelieu than the incomparable entertainer Voltaire?

Voltaire was willing. He promised to plan a program of fêtes, balls, processions, games, buffooneries of every description—even to write a skit especially for the occasion—if the Duke in turn would promise him something. This time the laugh-maker refused to work for dubious rewards. At the first vacancy in the royal household he must be appointed a Gentleman-in-Ordinary of the king's chamber, and for immediate compensation he must as soon as the festival is over be made royal historiographer.

The Duke promises, and Voltaire sets to work on his skit,

FREDERICK THE GREAT

which he calls the Princess of Navarre and in which he tactfully makes the hero a dashing breaker of hearts, in whom, through his Spanish disguise, will be easily recognized the First Gentleman of the Bedchamber.

Voltaire seizes another opportunity this year to win back court favor. The king of France, not to be outdone by George II of England, goes to his army. There he promptly falls sick. A great fuss is cooked up over this to make him popular—the king (down with a bad case of sunburn) has stepped into the jaws of death to save his people, etc., etc., church-bells are set ringing throughout France as soon as he is well enough to move around again, and the king is hailed back to life as Louis-the-Well-Beloved, his title ever after. Voltaire too hails him back in a poem "On the Events of the Year," in which he takes the long ears from Louis's head and puts laurel leaves there instead.

He goes to Paris with Madame du Châtelet to be present at the festivities celebrating the king's recovery, then to Versailles to prepare for the festival. Is he conscious of the curious rôle that he, Voltaire, author of the *Henriade,* and the *English Letters,* is playing at this moment when men are dying by the thousand on the battlefield? Yes—turning his mocking glance upon himself, he exclaims, "Here at Versailles I play a part similar to that of an atheist in a church! Do you not pity a poor devil who at fifty is a king's buffoon? But I must satisfy the Court."

A week before the festival his brother Armand dies. For years they have had nothing to do with one another. Armand died still Receiver-of-Fees to the Chamber of Accounts, but self-styled the "Abbé Arouet." In the parish register it is recorded that his funeral on February 19th, 1745, was attended by "François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *bourgeois* of Paris."

The festival at least brings results. There is so much talking and bustling about of great people in the immense temporary structure that the Duke of Richelieu has had built on the

horse-training ground near the palace at Versailles to serve as a theatre and ballroom that no one can hear the words of *The Princess of Navarre,* but this does not prevent its receiving unqualified praise. The whole program of entertainment is agreed to be an immense success. Louis, in fine humor nowadays, makes good the Duke's promises. Voltaire shall have the next vacancy among the gentlemen-in-ordinary, and, for the other part of the Duke's promise, a month later the following document is in Voltaire's hands.

"Today, April 1, 1745. The king being at Versailles, taking into consideration that the recompenses which His Majesty accords to those who devote themselves to the study of letters contribute to their progress by the emulation which they excite, no one has appeared to His Majesty more worthy to receive marks of his benevolence and to be distinguished by an honorable title than the Sieur Arouet de Voltaire, who, by the superiority of his talents and his steady application, has made the most rapid progress in all the sciences that he has cultivated, and of which his works, received with just applause, are the fruit. To this effect His Majesty has retained and retains the said Sieur de Voltaire in quality of historiographer of France, permits him to take the title and quality of the same in all documents and papers whatsoever, desiring him to enjoy all the honors and prerogatives which persons hitherto invested with such titles have enjoyed and had a right to enjoy, together with the sum of two thousand francs of emolument, payable annually during his life, beginning with the 1st of January last, according to the conditions and ordinances which will be drawn up by virtue of the present brevet, as well as to certify its validity.

"Signed, "Louis."

Voltaire smiles—a smile not altogether lacking in bitterness—as he murmurs—

"My good plays never brought me one look from the king.

At length honors and benefits rain upon me for a farce of the fair."

XII

But he has a purpose in life and these are means to the end.

The marriage festival is over. Madame du Châtelet's son has the smallpox. Voltaire hurries to him in the capacity of doctor, and pours two hundred pints of lemonade down his throat—thus the future Duke of Châtelet is saved for the guillotine. Then he returns to Versailles to take up his official duties.

He writes Louis's reply to Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, accepting her offer to act as mediator between the warring nations. He writes a despatch to the Dutch protesting against their intention to help England resist invasion by the Pretender, whom France is planning to put back on the throne of the Stuarts. He writes the manifesto to be read in England upon the landing of the French expedition under the Duke of Richelieu—which never lands.

He does more. To give Louis full measure Voltaire turns poet laureate.

The French king had again gone to the front, taking with him the Dauphin. On May 10th is fought the battle of Fontenoy. Voltaire's friend D'Argenson, Minister of War, who is present at the battle, sends him a long and detailed account of this great French victory, (so nearly a defeat), that Voltaire may celebrate it immediately in a poem. D'Argenson tells how on arriving at the French camp from Paris the night before the battle he was told that the king had gone on an airing. How he found his majesty on a hill-top looking interestedly towards the distant camp of the enemy. How he had never seen a man more cheerful than was Louis the Well-Beloved upon this occasion. How the conversation turned naturally on the point of history: Which of our kings gained the last royal battle? How the king kept everybody in good spirits through the night by singing droll verses, and the Dauphin went to the battle as to

a hare-hunting, rolling his eyes humorously, and saying, "What is all this?" How the rolling fire of the English resembled the flames of hell, "you will be told of a terrible moment in which we beheld a second edition of Dettingen!" How the king's guard was doubled. How a fine counter-attack was made by the Irish brigade, excellent troops, "especially when they march against the English." How the Dauphin, standing on a hilltop with the king watching the battle, had from a natural impulse drawn his sword in the most graceful manner, and insisted upon charging, but was naturally requested to desist. How it was the Duke of Richelieu who had conceived and put into execution the original idea of attacking the English infantry "like hunters, or foragers, pell-mell, the hand lowered, the arm shortened, masters, servants, officers, cavalry, infantry, all together!" [1] How the English column at sight of all this coming at them had wisely broken ranks and fled. How the triumph was the finest thing in the world, God save the king! hats in the air and upon bayonets! the compliments of the sovereign to his troops!—and how it was a glorious sight to see the king and the Dauphin, serene amid all the commotion, writing upon a drum the number of the enemy killed and taken prisoner in this their first great victory.

With this wealth of material to work with, Voltaire has little trouble in turning out immediately *Fontenoy!*, a three hundred line poem which he dedicates to Louis the Well-Beloved, and which is declaimed in every town of the kingdom, running through five editions in ten days. But there is another D'Argenson, the man not the war minister, who in describing the battle had written, "After all, to mention the bad with the good, I observed a habit, too easily acquired, of looking with tranquillity on the dying and the dead, and on the reeking wounds which were to be seen on every part of the field of battle. I own that my own heart failed, and that I stood in need of a cordial. I attentively observed our young heroes, who seemed too indifferent upon this occasion. I am fearful

[1] Everybody, in fact, apparently, but Louis and the Dauphin, still stationed on the hilltop in reserve.

that this inhuman carnage may harden their dispositions through the course of their lives." Who, having painted the glory of the triumph, hats in the air, the king and the Dauphin writing on the drum, etc., had added what Voltaire did not need to be told, "But the ground of the picture was human blood and fragments of human flesh!" To this D'Argenson, while writing *Fontenoy!*, Voltaire, in their private correspondence exclaims—

"Peace, Monseigneur, peace, and you are a great man even among the fools!"

XIII

In the life of Voltaire a most notable incident now presents itself. . . . He obtains the Pope's blessing.

Ever since his success at Court Voltaire had been meditating a plan for getting this. He wants it for two reasons. First, while he has Louis's favor, and that of the new royal mistress Madame de Pompadour (called by Frederick, Petticoat III) he does not have that of the queen, who is greatly under the influence of the Bishop of Mirepoix. At any moment, also, Louis frightened by some illness may throw over his mistresses and become devout as the Bourbons have a habit of doing. To protect himself against persecution from the French priests Voltaire has devised the amazing scheme of fleeing into the arms of the very head of their Church. Secondly, he has not forgotten the suppression of *Mahomet*. He means to publish this play in book form, and later to put it on the stage again, if he has to make an ally of the Pope to do it.

He goes to the younger D'Argenson and unburdens himself of what he has in mind. "I would like," says Voltaire humbly, "some mark of papal benevolence that will do me honor both in this world and the next."

The minister for foreign affairs stares at him. Marks of papal benevolence for Voltaire anathematized by priests everywhere as the Antichrist! Marks of papal benevolence for the

author of the *Henriade,* and the *English Letters,* and *Mahomet,* and all the other Voltairean attacks, direct or indirect, upon the Holy Roman Church! Marks of papal benevolence for the man who, were he not Voltaire, would long ago have been burned at the stake!

There is pity in the Marquis D'Argenson's eyes as he asks Voltaire to sit down, and rest himself a minute . . . At fifty then this brilliant mind is giving way, senility setting in . . .

But Voltaire, to the minister's astonishment, seems to have a definite program. Pope Benedict XIV is the author of a number of books—Voltaire is at the present moment reading these. He expects to enter into an indirect correspondence with his Holiness, in which he will compliment the Pope both on the subject matter and the style of his writings. From what he has heard of Pope Benedict XIV's character, he believes his Holiness will not be displeased at these compliments paid him as author to author by Voltaire. At the proper moment he wants D'Argenson to ask the French envoy at Rome to tactfully suggest to his Holiness that nothing would be more appreciated by Voltaire than some mark of papal favor.

D'Argenson shakes his head. He sees a certain method in Voltaire's plan now, but the thing seems to him an impossibility. Voltaire goes away.

But not despairing. It is common knowledge that Pope Benedict is a scholar with a genial personality, no bigot, and that he owed his election indeed to his sociability. Was it not reported that when the college of cardinals could not agree who of their number to make Pope, Benedict had put forward his own qualifications in the words, "Why waste so much time in vain debates and researches? Do you want a saint? Elect Gotti. A politician? Aldovrandi. A good fellow? Take me." Besides being good-natured, Benedict must be fully aware that the French priests are out for themselves far more than they are for the Pope, and hence doubtless will not be averse to slighting them. Voltaire now pulls the other string he has to his bow. A relative of Madame du Châtelet, very well disposed towards

himself, has a friend in the Pope's household, the Abbé de Tolignan. Through the mouth of this friend Voltaire tells the Pope how greatly he admires his writings, and suggests the small mark of papal favor.

The Pope responds. Gives the Abbé two of his large medals, bearing his own portrait, to be sent to Voltaire.

Meanwhile D'Argenson, recovering from his amazement at the audacity of Voltaire's scheme, and not disinclined to help him in his fight with the Court bigots, has decided to do what he can. What particular mark of papal benevolence does Voltaire wish? Voltaire knows the two large medals are on the way. But if he can get four so much the better! He would like very much, he tells the minister of foreign affairs, to have the French envoy instructed to ask his Holiness for two of his large medals for Voltaire.

The French envoy makes the request. The Pope stares at him bewildered, then bursts out laughing. How large a medal does Voltaire want? "To St. Peter himself I should not give any larger ones!" he exclaims.

Proudly Voltaire exhibits the Pope's medals. He speaks familiarly of the Pope nowadays as though Voltaire and Benedict had gone into company together. In the matter of religion he assures his friends that his Holiness "has the air of knowing very well *what all that is worth.*" He writes some Latin verses by way of return for the medals, in which he refers to Benedict XIV as the ornament of Rome and the father of the world, whose works instruct the earth and whose virtues adorn it.

But this is only the beginning. Voltaire now dedicates *Mahomet* to the Pope and sends a copy of the play to the Pope with the following letter—

VERY HOLY FATHER,—

Your Holiness will be pleased to pardon the liberty which one of the humblest, but one of the warmest, admirers of virtue takes in consecrating to the chief of the true religion a pro-

duction against the founder of a religion false and barbarous. To whom could I more properly address a satire upon the cruelty and the errors of a false prophet than to the vicar and imitator of a God of peace and truth? Will your Holiness deign to permit that I place at your feet both the book and its author? I dare ask your protection for the one, and your benediction for the other. It is with these sentiments of profound veneration that I prostrate myself and kiss your sacred feet."

How will the Pope take this present and letter? Voltaire to pave the way for them has already sent to Rome his poem *Fontenoy!*, his lines for the Pope's portrait, and a long preliminary letter singing the praises of his Holiness. Impatiently he waits to see what will happen. At last comes the Pope's reply, worth waiting for—

"Benedict XIV, Pope, to his dear son, salutation and Apostolic Benediction. Some weeks ago there was presented to me on your behalf your admirable tragedy of 'Mahomet,' which I have read with very great pleasure. Cardinal Passionei gave me afterwards, in your name, the beautiful poem of 'Fontenoy.' M. Leprotti has communicated to me your distich for my portrait; and Cardinal Valenti yesterday sent me your letter of August 17th. Each of these marks of your goodness merited a particular expression of my gratitude; but permit me to unite these different attentions in order to render you my thanks for all of them at once. You ought not to doubt the singular esteem with which merit so acknowledged as yours inspires me. When your distich was published in Rome, we were told that a man of letters, a Frenchman, being in a company when it was spoken of, discovered in it a verse of false quantity. He pretended that the word *hic,* which you employ as short, ought always to be long. We replied that he was in error; that that syllable was short or long in the poets indifferently, Virgil having made the word short in this verse—

'Solus hic inflexit sensus, animumque labantem,'
and long in this—

'Hic finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum.'

"Was this answer bad for a man who has not read Virgil in fifty years? Although you are the interested party in this difference, we have so high an idea of your candor and integrity, that we do not hesitate to make you the judge between your critic and ourselves. Nothing remains but for us to grant you our Apostolic Benediction.

"Given at Rome, on the day of Holy Mary the greater, September 19, 1745, the sixth year of our pontificate."

Benedict XIV, Pope, to his dear son, Voltaire, salutation, and Apostolic Benediction! What price the Bishop of Mirepoix now? Voltaire hunts diligently for a suitable quotation with which to crush the unknown French trouble-maker, and replies—

"Very Holy Father,—

"The lineaments of your Holiness are not better expressed in the medals with which you have had the particular goodness to gratify me, than are those of your mind and character in the letter with which you have deigned to honor me. I place at your feet my very humble and heart-felt thanks. I am obliged to recognize the infallibility of your Holiness in your literary decisions, as in other things more important. Your Holiness has a better acquaintance with the Latin tongue than the French fault-finder whose mistake you deigned to correct. I admire the aptness of your citation from Virgil. Among the monarchs who have been amateurs in literature, the sovereign pontiffs have always distinguished themselves; but none have adorned like your Holiness the most profound erudition with the richest ornaments of polite literature.

"If the Frenchman who censured with so little justice the syllabic *hic* had had his Virgil as present to his memory as

your Holiness, he would have been able to cite, very apropos, a verse in which this word is both short and long. That beautiful verse seemed to me to contain the presage of all the favors with which your generous goodness has overwhelmed me. It is this—

'Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti sæpius audis.' [1]

"Rome ought to resound with this verse, to the exaltation of Benedict XIV. It is with sentiments of the most profound veneration and of the most lively gratitude that I kiss your sacred feet."

Shortly afterwards an edition of *Mahomet* appears, having as introduction, in Italian and French, this correspondence between Voltaire and the Pope. Is the Bishop of Mirepoix impressed? Apparently he is, for when a few weeks later, there comes another vacancy in the Academy he does not raise his voice, and Voltaire is elected.

XIV

From Prussia the royal hand still beckons.

Frederick jeers at Voltaire's new titles. "Finish the *Pucelle*," [2] he calls to Louis's historiographer. "Believe me it is more worth while to smooth the wrinkles from the foreheads of worthy people than to compose gazettes for blackguards."

He complains bitterly when he thinks that Voltaire, who keeps writing on this poem from time to time, has sent the Duchess of Wurtemberg an installment which he himself has not received. "Know that she has had it copied. Such are the people whom you trust—while the only persons who deserve your confidence or rather to whom you ought to abandon yourself entirely are the only ones whom you mistrust!"

He mocks at the genius extraordinary who has become a gentleman-in-ordinary to the Well-Beloved. He tries to make

[1] This is the man, this is he whom thou hast often heard promised to thee.
[2] A burlesque poem having Joan of Arc as the central figure but the Church its principal butt.

Voltaire jealous of Maupertuis whom he has made president of his Academy of Science. "The whole of Berlin is interested in him. He is the finest conquest I ever made in my life. As for you, you are inconstant, ungrateful, perfidious!"

Frederick, for all his gibing, is angry. These honors paid Voltaire by the French king, his receiving the Pope's blessing, have they defeated his own ambition to possess Voltaire?

He is alarmed further by the knowledge that Voltaire is writing a history of the present war. How is the King of Prussia going to be treated in this? "I wish you would not write the campaign of '41 but give the last touches to the *Age of Louis the Great.* Contemporary authors are accused by all ages of falling into the bitterness of satire or the fatuity of flattery. If there were any means to make you write a bad book it would be by compelling you to work on that you have undertaken." Frederick is himself, as Voltaire knows, at work on memoirs which will justify his march into Silesia.

The King is not reassured when Voltaire replies, "Heaven preserve me, Sire, from printing my history of the war. But the more I love truth the less I should waste it." As casual afterthought, apparently, Voltaire adds, "Cæsar wrote his commentaries and you are writing yours."

Frederick feels the sting, but affects indifference. "So your taste for history is finally confirmed. Follow this strange impulse since you must."

He returns to his derision of Voltaire's relationship with Madame du Châtelet, styling Voltaire the "invisible and piteous prisoner of Circe!"

"Madame du Châtelet and I, Sire," replies Voltaire, "are still occupied by the same veneration for your Majesty." He adds that before this letter reaches the King of Prussia Voltaire will probably have drawn his last breath. "I await death patiently. I have no regret in this world except that of not seeing again the greatest man who ornaments it."

The King winces. He replies angrily, "As long as you only die metaphorically I shall leave you to it!"

Soon afterwards Frederick has an attack of apoplexy. Reports of his death spread through Europe. But the King recovers. As soon as he is well enough to write he endeavors again to make Voltaire come to him.

"If I had gone below I should have watched for you. But I would rather make an appointment with you in this world!"

But Voltaire's brief period of favor at the French court is already nearing its end.

He may play up his titles to pique Frederick, but they have brought him little happiness. Writing verses in praise of Louis, and skits for his entertainment, has begun to pall.

When he takes his place at the table of the gentlemen-in-ordinary he is looked at askance. The fact that he is Voltaire means nothing to his aristocratic colleagues. He has usurped a privilege of birth. To them he is simply *bourgeois* of Paris.

Complaints from indignant noblemen reach the king's ears. Louis, who at heart dislikes Voltaire, is glad when soon afterwards Voltaire of his own accord requests permission to sell the post while retaining the title as an honorary distinction.

And now he is to discover that a position in the king's household, the friendship of ministers, the good wishes of the king's mistress, being an Academician, even the Pope's blessing, are no protection against persecution—that in the last analysis it is the donkey-bishops who are the real power in France.

The Bishop of Mirepoix has been biding his time. His opportunity comes. Madame de Pompadour had formed a company of amateur actors from the courtiers, and the first play she gave was Voltaire's comedy *The Prodigal Son.* Voltaire, in gratitude, writes a poem which imprudently praises the king and his mistress in the same breath. This poem is not meant to reach the wing of the royal palace inhabited by the queen and her daughters and where she has given the bishop a suite of apartments, but a copy finds its way here. A council is held. It is the custom for the princesses to go each day to their father's

side of the palace to give him a good-morning kiss. They take with them now an order exiling Voltaire which only needs the king's signature. They indignantly point out to Louis the line in Voltaire's poem which reads "May both of you keep your conquests!" Is such a comparison of the Pompadour's good-fortune at Court with those risks and glorious exploits on the battlefield which earned for their father the title of Well-Beloved to be permitted? Before Madame de Pompadour knows anything about it Louis has signed the order of exile.

If no immediate steps are taken to put this order into force there soon follows an incident which further undermines Voltaire's security at Court. One day Madame du Châtelet, playing cards at the queen's table, loses steadily. Voltaire, standing near her, is watching the game carefully. Finally, when she has lost 84,000 francs, he leans over and tells her in an undertone in English to come away, she is playing with cheats. Madame du Châtelet discovers he has been overheard, and is in danger of instant arrest. They leave Fontainebleau hurriedly.

Voltaire finds a refuge with the Duchesse du Maine while Madame du Châtelet returns to court to pay her gambling debts and try to explain away Voltaire's remark. At Sceaux, for two months, Voltaire remains in very close hiding. Only the old Duchess knows he is here. He stays in his room all day. At night a supper is laid for him on a table beside her bed, and he appears surreptitiously bringing what he has written during the day to amuse her. Thus the short philosophical romances, *Babouc, Memnon, Scarmentado, Micromegas* and *Zadig* are added to the long list of his writings.

With Madame du Châtelet, as the atmosphere around Versailles remains unhealthy for him, he now goes to the court of King Stanislas at Lunéville, a day's ride eastward from Cirey. The old king without a country, much to the chagrin of his daughter, the Queen of France, is a great admirer of Voltaire, who has previously spent short periods with him. Like Frederick King Stanislas has a taste for literature, and also no use for priests. But Voltaire, leaving Madame du Châtelet at

Lunéville, soon interrupts his visit to make a secret trip back to Paris where he has heard Piron is trying to ruin his new play *Sémiramis.*

The Café Procope one night after a performance of *Sémiramis.* Here foregather all the critics. Tonight Piron's crowd hold the floor. Voltaire's new play is reviled and burlesqued. In a dim corner of the café sits an old priest in cassock and long cloak. A large untidy wig falls down over his face—of this only a pair of large spectacles and the tip of his nose are visible as he sits bowed over his breviary. When Voltaire, in this strange disguise, returns home after listening to his enemies' comments, he frightens his young secretary Longchamp nearly out of his wits.

On the way back to Lunéville Longchamp receives another scare. Voltaire falls sick at an inn. Feebly he signs to the secretary to come to his bedside. "In a voice scarcely audible he entreated me not to abandon him, *but to remain near him in order to cast a little earth upon his body when he had breathed his last.*"

But Voltaire does not die. He gets well again, and is soon writing to Frederick for medicine—

"I beg your Majesty will be graciously pleased to send me a pound of genuine Stahl's pills," adding, "this will bring me to a state which may enable me to pay you my court at the beginning of the summer."

Frederick distrusts the promise, but sends the pills. With the warning however that—

"The pills you ask of me are sufficient to purge all France and to kill your three Academies. Do not imagine that these pills are sweatmeats; you might make a mistake. Here they are only used by pregnant women."

Why, thinks Frederick angrily, has Voltaire gone to Lunéville instead of coming to Berlin? Peace has been signed at Aix-la-Chapelle, and the King is more anxious than ever to have Voltaire with him tutoring him in French verse-making. "They

say that King Stanislas enchants Madame du Châtelet and the gentleman-in-ordinary of the chamber to Louis XV, that is to say he cannot do without you both. The fate of men is very different; while he enjoys all sorts of pleasures, I, poor fool, perhaps cursed by God, write verses." Why, for a whole year, has he received from the most brilliant poet in France not a single verse?

"I admire your verses passionately," replies Voltaire, "but write none myself. I limit myself to prose as a wretched historiographer should. I count the poor people killed in the last war and always tell the truth within a few thousand."

The irony in this answer is not lost on Frederick. So Voltaire is still writing about the war. He sends some of his own verses to Voltaire for criticism. What does he get?

"I could easily believe that the *Ode on War* is by some poor citizen, who is also a good poet, weary of paying his tenth, and the tenth of the tenth and of seeing his land ravaged in the quarrels of kings. Not at all, it is by the King who began the quarrel, it is by him who won, with weapon in hand, a province and six battles. Sire, your Majesty writes beautiful verses but you laugh at the world."

This! This and empty flattery of the other verses sent. Frederick wants to go down to posterity not only as a great soldier but also as a great poet. It rankles with him that, no matter how hard he tries, he cannot write poetry like Voltaire's. He senses, through Voltaire's flattery, a secret disdain of himself as a poet. But he means to learn all he can learn from the greatest living master of the art—and that is why he wants Voltaire in Prussia.

The King sits wrapped in revery. How much has happened since the days when he was Prince Royal! Frederick allows himself one of those brief and poignant moments when his blue eyes dream again. And these mocking letters of Voltaire nowadays contrasted in memory with the old ones written from Cirey when Voltaire used to take such pains correcting his

verses, are suddenly able to hurt not the King but the man."

"I hoped that your letters would contain a criticism of the poems such as you used to write when I lived at Rheinsberg where poor Kaiserling,[1] whom I regret and always shall regret, so admired you. . . . Come, come—" exclaims Frederick stirred by a genuine sentiment that he tries to hide beneath humor, "—without teeth, without ears, without eyes, and without legs, if you cannot come otherwise; so long as that indefinable something which makes you think and inspires you so beautifully comes with you, that will suffice!"

But Voltaire too thinks of the gay young Count Kaiserling —of all the young Kaiserlings who have died on the battlefield during the last seven years. It is not enough for him that the King of Prussia, after making war, should then write odes condemning war. And he writes back—

"I beg you will grant me a favor which will cost you little; it is to be so good as to conquer some provinces towards the south, like Naples and Sicily, or the kingdom of Granada and Andalusia. Life is a pleasure in those countries which are always warm. Your Majesty would not fail to visit them every year, just as you visit Glogau, and I should be a most assiduous courtier. I would talk to you of verse or prose under the shade of pomegranates and orange trees and you would reanimate my frozen energy; I would cast flowers on the tomb of Kaiserling; and I should like to die like him, but very old, in your service; for indeed, Sire, it is very sad to live for long far from Frederick the Great."

XV

At Lunéville Voltaire, while massing his heavy artillery for new drives on the Church, has a queer little side-quarrel with M. Alliot, aulic councilor to King Stanislas, and administrator of the king's household.

Neither the aulic councilor nor his wife approve of Vol-

[1] Killed in the war.

taire's habit of taking his meals so often in his own rooms. They begin stinting his allowance of bread, wine and candles.

Voltaire makes verbal protests. The aulic councilor pays no attention to them. This queer little Frenchman is, in his opinion, a nuisance. Better that he write less poetry and give larger tips.

Voltaire loses his temper. He is working busily on two new plays, but he must eat, he must have light, and he likes a little wine for his stomach's sake.

"At the court of his Majesty, King Frederick of Prussia, I was not obliged to importune every day for bread, wine, and candles," he writes indignantly to M. Alliot. "Permit me to say to you," he adds angrily, "that it belongs to the dignity of the King of Poland and the honor of your administration not to refuse these trifling attentions to an officer of the court of the King of France, who has the honor to pay his respects to the King of Poland!"

This note he dates "August 29th, at a quarter past nine in the morning." He tells his messenger that he will wait just half an hour for the aulic councilor's reply. None comes.

What! aulic councilor M. Alliot defies Voltaire! He has expended on this little quarrel with the councilor over bread, wine and candles more nervous energy than goes into the writing of half a dozen of his plays. He feels that he is about fed up on M. Alliot's insolence. He now sits down and writes a note to King Stanislas, dating it "August 29th, at a quarter past ten in the morning."

"Sire, when we are in Paradise, it is necessary for us to address ourselves to God. Your Majesty has permitted me to pay you my court until the end of the autumn, when I shall not be able to avoid taking leave of your Majesty. Your Majesty is aware that I am very sick, and that unceasing labors, not less than my continual sufferings, retain me in my own rooms. I am compelled to beseech your Majesty to give orders that the director of your Majesty's household shall condescend tc pay me those attentions, necessary and suitable to the dig-

nity of your abode, with which your Majesty honors foreigners who come to your court. Kings, from the time of Alexander, have had it in charge to nourish men of letters; and when Virgil was in the house of Augustus, *Alliotus*, aulic councilor to Augustus, caused Virgil to be supplied with bread, wine and candles. I am sick today, and have neither bread nor wine for dinner. I have the honor to be, with profound respect, Sire, of your Majesty the very humble servant.

"Voltaire."

The bread, wine and candles arrive, and are not withheld from now on. Still in other little ways the aulic councilor and his wife continue to annoy. Both go to church regularly. They believe Voltaire's sickness is feigned—that in the solitude of his room he practises black magic, and conjures up the devil. They feel uneasy with him around. The fears of the councilor's wife reach a climax when one day she happens to be in the same room with Voltaire during a bad thunderstorm. At each flash of lightning she trembles and casts a glance at Voltaire sitting peacefully by the fire. There is no doubt in her mind but that God is looking for Voltaire, and that if His all-seeing eye has not yet perceived the Antichrist sitting here beside the fire, the thunderbolt forged to destroy him will nevertheless strike the palace in a minute. At last after an especially vivid flash she can no longer keep silent,—going to Voltaire's side she cries that if he had any consideration for the lives of others he would immediately leave the palace.

This suggestion that he quit his warm station beside the fire and run out into the rain by no means pleases Voltaire. Rising to his feet he points to the sky and shouts angrily—

"Madame, I have thought and written more good of him whom you are afraid of than you will be able to say of him in the whole of your life!"

But at Lunéville also the beginning and end of a tragedy.

Here Madame du Châtelet has made the acquaintance of a young poet-officer, the Marquis de Saint-Lambert. She is forty-

one when they first meet, he ten years younger. Voltaire surprises them together one day in her room "conversing," as Longchamp discreetly expurgates the situation, "upon something besides verses and philosophy."

He breaks out into violent reproaches. The young Marquis as angrily inquires by what right Voltaire takes it upon himself to censure his conduct. Voltaire rushes from the room.

He orders his secretary immediately to find him a post-chaise as he is going back to Paris. Longchamp thinks it advisable first to consult the Marquise. Madame du Châtelet instructs him to tell Voltaire there is no carriage available.

Later there comes a knock at Longchamp's door. He opens it . . . Madame du Châtelet is standing there . . . She has come to see his master. He announces her, enters Voltaire's room with her, lights two candles, and withdraws, leaving her sitting on the foot of the bed. But only a thin partition separates his own room from that of Voltaire and he hastily puts his ear to the wall.

For a while they talk English, which Longchamp cannot understand, then he hears Voltaire break angrily into French—

"What! You wish me to believe you after what I have seen! I have exhausted my health, my fortune; I have sacrificed all for you; and you deceive me!"

"No," comes Madame du Châtelet's voice, "I love you always; but for a long time you have complained that you are sick, that your strength abandons you; I am extremely afflicted by it; I am very far from wishing your death; your health is very dear to me; no one in the world takes more interest in it than I do. On your part, you have always shown much interest in mine; you have known and approved the regimen which suits it; you have even favored and shared it as long as it was in your power to do so. Since you agree that you could not continue to take care of it except to your great damage, ought you to be offended that it is one of your friends who supplies your place?"

A long silence. Then Voltaire's voice again—

"Ah, madame, you are always right. But since things must be as they are, at least let them not pass before my eyes."

They seem friends again when the Marquise leaves. A few hours later another person to see Voltaire. . . . The Marquis de Saint-Lambert . . . Longchamp announces him, withdraws, but this time leaves the door partly open so that he can see as well as hear.

The Marquis starts to apologize for his angry words. Before he can finish Longchamp sees Voltaire seize the young man's hands, embrace him, and exclaim, "I have forgotten all. It is I who was in the wrong. You are in the happy age of love and delight. Enjoy those moments, too brief. An old man, an invalid, like me is not made for the pleasures."

The next day they all three have supper together. Some months pass. Madame du Châtelet discovers she is going to have a child.

She confides her condition to Voltaire. They have returned to Cirey, where Madame du Châtelet is finishing her translation of Newton's *Principia*. He sends for Saint-Lambert who arrives next day.

At the council held Longchamp is again a listener. The secretary stands outside the door, his eye to a chink. Madame du Châtelet and Saint-Lambert both look worried. Voltaire is gay —evidently to make the other two feel better. The first question discussed is whether it will be possible to conceal the Marquise's condition from the public. The decision arrived at is, no. Now comes a more difficult one. In this case to what father shall the child be assigned? Longchamp notes that this question seems to embarrass greatly both Saint-Lambert and the Marquise. But his master remains gay—

" 'As to that,' said M. de Voltaire, 'we will put it among the miscellaneous works of Madame du Châtelet.' "

The secretary continues to listen and reports the following arrangement arrived at, and how carried out—

"On discussing the thing more gravely, it was agreed not to falsify the legal axiom, that *he is the father whom the nuptial relation indicates,* and that the child belonged of right to M. du Châtelet. To him, then, belonged the child; but the difficulty was to make him accept it. All being well weighed and deliberated, they agreed that madame should write at once to her husband, who was then at Dijon (a hundred and twenty miles away), and invite him to come immediately to Cirey to arrange some family business, so as to avoid a lawsuit with which she was threatened. She pressed him to come also for the purpose of receiving the money she had collected at Cirey for the expenses of the next campaign, adding that, if the war began again, he was to have a higher grade, which she had assisted to obtain for him by her influence.

"The marquis flew to Cirey, where he was received with lively demonstrations of tenderness and regard on the part of his wife. He was rejoiced to find there M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert, who neglected nothing that could render his visit to his estate agreeable. Madame invited several noblemen of the neighborhood to spend some days at the château. There were fêtes and little theatricals. At dinner great cheer was made. The marquis performed well his part at table, having previously gained a great appetite in going to see his farmers and inspecting his forges and woods. All the guests were in the best of humor, and testified their delight in seeing M. du Châtelet again. He related some stories of the last campaign in Flanders. M. de Voltaire heightened the general gayety by the drollest and most diverting stories.

"Madame du Châtelet was dressed with extreme elegance. She sat next her husband, and paid him, without affectation, pretty little attentions, to which he responded by addressing flattering compliments to his wife. M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert exchanged glances. Indeed, during dessert the marquis was in a beautiful humor and became entirely gallant. His wife appeared in his eyes such as he had beheld her at

twenty. He felt himself transported back to the same age, and played the young man. During this little conjugal colloquy the other guests, animated by champagne, talked loudly of hunting, fishing, horses and dogs.

"From that night the pair occupied the same suite of rooms. Nothing was neglected to sustain the illusion during the following days. Three weeks and more passed in a kind of enchantment, and then madame declared to her husband that, from certain signs, she had reason to believe herself *enceinte*.

"At this news M. du Châtelet thought he should faint with joy. He sprang to the neck of his wife, embraced her, and went immediately to communicate what he had heard to all his friends who were in the château. Every one congratulated him, and called upon madame to testify the interest they took. The news was promptly spread into the neighboring villages. Gentlemen, lawyers, large farmers, came to compliment M. du Châtelet. He received them all with delight. Perhaps he was secretly flattered to prove to them that he could still be of service elsewhere than in the field. At length the time arrived for M. du Châtelet to return to his post, and he took his departure. M. de Saint-Lambert went back to Lunéville, Madame la Marquise and M. de Voltaire renewed preparations for their journey to Paris. All four set out from Cirey, well content with what had passed there."

Thus, for the time being, the situation is cleared up. Madame du Châtelet goes on with Newton. Voltaire with his plays. But in the distance a grim spectre, looming above the horizon, takes a step nearer.

They return to Lunéville so that Madame du Châtelet may be near the real father of the child when it is born.

Voltaire writes to Frederick telling him he will have to postpone his visit. He tells the King that Madame du Châtelet expects a child in the autumn, which at her age may be dangerous, but gives no further details. Frederick, confident that

neither Voltaire nor the Marquis du Châtelet is the father, writes to other correspondents in France asking them to unearth the facts.

The King of Prussia is angry. Once again this woman has spoiled his plans. There is peace in Europe now, but how long will it last? Frederick has a feeling that if he does not get Voltaire to come to Prussia this year, the chance will be gone forever.

"Listen," he writes, "I have a whim to see you; it would be treason if you do not lend yourself to gratify this fancy. I want to study with you; I have leisure this year, and God knows if I shall ever have again. Madame du Châtelet will be delivered in September; you are not a midwife; she can have her child perfectly well without you; and if necessary you can then go back to Paris."

Voltaire replies—

"Not even Frederick the Great, before whom they tremble, can prevent me from carrying out a duty I consider indispensable. I am neither a maker of children nor a doctor nor a midwife, but I am a friend, and even for your Majesty's sake I will not leave a woman who may die in September. Her lying-in has every appearance of being very dangerous; but if she escapes I promise you, Sire, that I will come and pay you my court in October."

The King's eyes narrow. How he hates the Du Châtelet! But he returns to the attack.

"I wish nobody but you for my master in everything regarding language, taste and the department of Parnassus. But you, my dear Voltaire, are like the bad Christian; you put off your conversion from day to day. After having given me hopes for the summer, you put me off to the winter. Apparently Apollo, as god of medicine, orders you to preside over the lying-in of Madame du Châtelet." There is something else that rankles. Frederick has been talking recently with some French visitors from Paris. "I was surprised to learn that

works of yours whose very names I did not know had appeared. There was a time when I saw them in manuscript, now I hear from others what is said of them and only receive them after the booksellers have published the second edition."

As the critical moment approaches all three principal actors in this tragicomedy feel the strain. But Madame du Châtelet wants Voltaire to keep up a light-hearted correspondence. The last day of August he writes to the King—

"Madame du Châtelet is not yet delivered. It gives her more trouble to produce a child than a book."

Frederick replies—

"Since Madame du Châtelet writes books, I do not think she will produce her child in a moment of distraction. Tell her to hurry up, for I am eager to see you." Frederick, jealous of the manner in which Madame du Châtelet holds the center of the stage, passes quickly to his real interest. "I feel my extreme need of you and the great aid you may be to me. I wish to owe my knowledge of the French language to you. I correct myself as much as my requirements permit, but I have no purist sufficiently severe to point out all my faults. I am expecting you and preparing a great reception for the gentleman in ordinary and the genius in extraordinary. In Paris they say you will not come, I say you will. You are like the white elephant for which the king of Persia and the grand Mogul go to war, and with which they augment their titles when they are happy enough to possess it. When you come here, you will see that mine are Frederick by the Grace of God, King of Prussia, Elector of Brandenburg, Possessor of Voltaire, etc."

Four days later Voltaire is writing gayly to his friends—

"This evening Madame du Châtelet, being at her desk, according to her laudable custom, said, '*But I feel something!*' That something was a little girl, who came into the world forthwith. It was placed upon a volume of geometry, which happened to be lying near, and the mother has gone to bed."

A silence of several weeks. Then, from Paris, from a Voltaire beside himself with grief, to a Frederick who still taunts, the heartbroken letter of October 15th—

"Sire,

"I have just made an effort in my present dreadful state of mind to write to M. d'Argens;[1] I will make another to throw myself at your Majesty's feet.

I have lost one who was my friend for twenty-five years, a great man, whose only defect was being a woman, whom all Paris regrets and honors. She did not perhaps receive justice during her life, and you perhaps have not judged her as you would have done, if she had had the honor to be known to your Majesty. But a woman who translates Newton and Virgil, and who had all the virtues of a man of honor, will no doubt have a share in your regret.

"The state I have been in for the last month hardly leaves me a hope of ever seeing you; but I will tell you boldly that if you knew my heart better you might also have the goodness to regret a man who has loved in your Majesty nothing but your person.

"Sire, you are a very great king; you dictated peace in Dresden; your fame will be great throughout all ages; but all your fame and all your power do not give you the right to distress a heart wholly devoted to you. Were I as well as I am ill, were I but ten leagues from your dominions, I would not stir a foot to visit the court of a great man who did not love me and who sent for me only as a sovereign. But if you knew me, if you had a true kindness for me, I would go to Pekin to throw myself at your feet. I am a man of sensibility, Sire, and nothing more than that."

Frederick sits thinking. Has the woman won, the king lost? He knows the facts by now, his correspondents having also sent him an account of what has happened since September 4th and Voltaire's last letter. The King takes a pinch of snuff, and turns

[1] One of Frederick's companions.

to his French verse-making. At last he finishes to his satisfaction an epitaph upon his dead enemy which seems to him clever enough to be worthy of Voltaire—

"Here lies one who lost her life from the double accouchement of a *Treatise of Philosophy* and of an unfortunate infant. It is not known precisely which of the two took her from us. Upon this lamentable event what opinion ought we to follow? Saint-Lambert assigns it to the book; Voltaire says it was the child."

XVI

Madame du Châtelet had died in the palace of King Stanislas six days after the birth of her child.

Her husband, whom she had recently induced the king to make grand marshal of his household . . . Voltaire . . . Saint-Lambert . . . were all three there.

She was well. The child had been christened in the chapel, and given out to nurse. On the fourth day, very warm, she had felt feverish. There was an iced drink, made of almond paste, sugar and water, that she liked very much—she insisted on drinking a large glass of it.

She became very sick, but on the sixth day seemed much better. Suddenly, late in the evening, she began to cough, to struggle for breath—and fell back dead.

Saint-Lambert and the secretary Longchamp were watching in the sick-room. Thinking she had only fainted they tried to revive her with smelling salts and rubbing, while at the same time sending for Voltaire and her husband who were having supper. When the latter arrived it was evident she was dead.

Other guests of Stanislas crowd into the room. The Marquis, dazed, his ruddy complexion turned white, is led out by them.

Voltaire and Saint-Lambert are left alone standing beside the bed.

Voltaire staggers from the room, moves blindly through the halls of the palace, reaches the great front door, totters down the steps, and falls insensible beside a sentry-box.

The Marquis de Saint-Lambert pick him up. Voltaire opens his eyes, in which for a moment there is no light of recognition. Then sobbing he exclaims, "Ah, my friend, it is you who have killed her!" . . . Saint-Lambert says nothing. . . . "What could have induced you to get her into that condition!" cries Voltaire, seizing the younger man by the shoulders. Again Saint-Lambert says nothing, but stands with his head bowed . . . Voltaire is led away to his room.

Meanwhile, Madame de Boufflers, a friend of the dead woman, is seeking Longchamp. She takes him aside. There is a locket-ring on Madame du Châtelet's finger. Bring it.

The secretary obeys. Madame de Boufflers picks out with a pin a portrait of Saint-Lambert. Now put it back.

Voltaire sends for Longchamp. If she is dead, at least he will always have this ring to remember her by—to recall the happy days at Cirey!

"It is a ring with my portrait in it!" he tells Longchamp, as the latter stands looking at him nervously. "I must have it!"

Longchamp informs him that he knows the ring meant, but that Voltaire's portrait was not in it at the time of Madame's death.

"Ah, how do you know that?"

The secretary tells him. Voltaire rises to his feet and clasps his hands. But even now he cannot control his penchant for vivid expression—

"Such are women!" he exclaims, "I took Richelieu out of the ring. Saint-Lambert expelled me. That is in the order of nature—one nail drives out another. So go the things of the world!"

"I pray M. du Châtelet to be so good as to burn all these papers without looking at them. They can be of no use to him, and have no relation to his affairs."

The Marquis du Châtelet and his brother the Count de Lomont stand looking down at a large package. Longchamp, to whom Madame du Châtelet had given instructions concerning

the disposal of her papers should anything happen to her, has just brought it to the Marquis, and stands nearby.

What is in the package? The Marquis, against the advice of his brother, opens it. Letters and manuscripts. Letters from Voltaire to his wife. Shall he read them? His brother urges him not to, but to respect this last wish, this mark of confidence, written in his wife's own hand.

The Marquis has never been jealous. He has long had his own mistresses. It is only recently that he has taken any strong personal interest in his wife. But now he suddenly wants to know. Has this friendship between his wife and Voltaire been really only platonic? In these letters under his hand lies his answer.

He cannot resist the temptation. He picks up some of the letters—ones written by Voltaire many years ago they seem to Longchamp—and begins reading them. First his face is expressionless, then the attentive secretary notes the fact that he "makes a wry face and shakes his ears." The Count, saying his brother's curiosity has brought only what it deserved, orders a lighted candle, empties the package into the fireplace, and sets fire to the papers.

Longchamp watches the flames with greedy eyes. These letters what might they be worth to posterity? Here and there he sees a pile of thick manuscript burning more slowly. He slips to the fire, manages to rake one of them out and to make away with it—it is Voltaire's *Treatise on Metaphysics*. But of all the letters, and the other manuscripts which Madame du Châtelet, who was in the habit of hiding away those of Voltaire's writings which she was afraid would make trouble for him, had put with them, nothing remains soon but a heap of ashes.

Madame du Châtelet having been buried with much ceremony at Lunéville, Voltaire and the Marquis went to Cirey, where Longchamp was busy for a fortnight packing up his master's belongings,

There was no quarrel between husband and lover. The Marquis's jealousy had been only momentary. He knew he had profited by his relationship with Voltaire. It was Voltaire who had finally brought the lawsuit to a successful conclusion. Each year he had made the Marquis a present of the interest on the money lent to repair the château. He had recently sold back the Marquis his annuity of forty thousand francs for fifteen thousand, of which the Marquis paid only ten.

They parted friends, and would always remain friends. Voltaire went to Paris to live in the house which Madame du Châtelet had bought here, of which he rented a part from the Marquis.

It was from Paris that he had written to Frederick, hurt to the quick by the unfeeling tone of the King's letters.

Voltaire was very close to death. He was sick in body, but he was more sick in spirit. It weighed upon him crushingly that he himself should have written so lightly about the birth of the child.

"Alas, madame," he writes now to one of his friends, the Marquise du Deffand, "we had turned that event into a jest; and it was in that unfortunate tone that I wrote, by her order, to her friends. If anything could augment the horror of my condition, it would be to have taken with gayety an adventure the result of which poisons the remainder of my miserable life."

His Paris rooms, too small to hold all the laboratory apparatus, books, and other things brought from Cirey, which litter the floor, add to his depression. The secretary watches him with anxious eyes as he grows weaker. Longchamp knows things about Madame du Châtelet which Voltaire does not know, but as yet he dare not tell his master.

Voltaire begins to have hallucinations. He gets up at night, fancies he sees Madame du Châtelet, calls to her, drags himself from room to room in search of her. Longchamp remains silent until a certain night in the Fall—

"It was the end of October, and the cold was already some-

what severe. He could not sleep, got out of bed, and after groping a few steps about the room felt so weak that he leaned against a table to keep from falling. He remained standing there a long time, shivering with cold, and yet reluctant to wake me. At length he forced himself to go into the next room, where almost all his books were heaped upon the floor. But he was far from remembering this, and, his head always filled with the same object, he was endeavoring to cross the room when running against a pile of folios he stumbled and fell. Unable to rise, he called me several times, but so feeble was his voice that at first I did not hear him, although I slept near by. Waking at last I heard him groan and faintly repeat my name. I sprang up and ran toward him. Having no light, and going very fast, my feet became entangled with his, and I fell upon him. Upon getting up, I found him speechless and almost frozen. I made haste to lift him to his bed, and having struck a light and made a great fire, I endeavored to warm him by wrapping his body and limbs in very hot cloths. This produced a good effect. Gradually I saw him coming to himself."

Now Longchamp, convinced that another such accident may be the death of Voltaire, tells. He has read letters written by Madame du Châtelet in which, even before her affair with Saint-Lambert, her amorous nature unsatisfied by Voltaire, she had spoken of him slightingly. At first Voltaire will not believe the secretary. But when Longchamp shows him the answers to some of these letters he can no longer doubt.

As in Frederick there are two people, the king and the man, so in Voltaire there are two, the genius and the "man of sensibility." He is staunch in his affections. Though not married to Madame du Châtelet he had sworn loyalty to her. For fourteen years Frederick had tried in vain to induce him to leave her and come to Prussia. If she had done much for him he had done much for her. He had praised her mind (which few besides himself thought extraordinary) tirelessly to his friends. He had written articles about her which had made her known

to literary and scientific circles throughout Europe. He had even carried his enthusiasm to the point of the ridiculous—in the catalogue of principal writers of the period, which made up half of the first volume of his History of the Age of Louis XIV he had included "Châtelet (Gabrielle-Emilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du)" though she was only nine years old when the Grand Monarch died. Now comes the sudden realization that for a number of years her interest in him can have been nothing more than pride of possession. That she wanted to keep him, not for himself, but because he was Voltaire. That her self-appointed censorship of his writings and the power to dictate his actions had flattered her vanity, and were privileges she did not intend to give up even though his society had become irksome.

He plunges into work again, and gets better. A conspiracy has been formed to ruin him as a playwright. The very actors who have risen to fame through his plays refuse to give any more of them. He rents the whole house from the Marquis, and turns the largest room into a little theatre. Here he gives *Semiramis, Mahomet, Rome Sauvée,* and others of his plays, himself taking parts in them, and drawing his cast from a company of amateurs, mostly working people, that he has heard of—one of these is a goldsmith's son named Lekain, now twenty-one and unknown, but destined with Voltaire's aid to become the foremost actor in France. This little theatre, to which Voltaire at first only invites his friends, soon becomes so famous, friends of these friends, ambassadors, and foreign notables clamoring for admission, that at last he has to issue tickets.

From Prussia Frederick's hand beckons more vigorously than ever. With Madame du Châtelet dead the King has hopes of Voltaire coming. He reminds Voltaire of his promise, writing "I respected the friendship which bound you to Madame du Châtelet; but after her I am one of your oldest friends."

It is true. Voltaire wavers. But his niece, Madame Denis,

daughter of his sister Catherine, and a widow, who is now keeping house for him in Paris, has taken the place of Madame du Châtelet as Frederick's enemy. She urges Voltaire not to go.

Her very opposition inclines Voltaire to go to Frederick. Shall he again allow a woman to keep him away from the king?

Whatever his disillusionment with Frederick in the past, however much he has resented the King's cruel jests at the expense of Madame du Châtelet, he cannot but realize that Frederick as a king towers above the other European monarchs. He has not forgotten that golden moment when the Prince Royal's first letter arrived. He knows now also certain things he did not know in the past. That Frederick, before marching into Silesia, had offered Maria Theresa his army to protect her other dominions from invasion if she would give him this province which he considered necessary to the safety of Prussia. That Cardinal Fleury, so indignant with Frederick for making a separate peace, had been secretly negotiating with the Austrian queen himself to this end, and that Frederick knew of this.

Shall he go or stay? He is fifty-six. He may die at any time. He would like to see Frederick once more before he dies.

Besides may he not need the King's friendship? This winter, besides his little theatre work, Voltaire has attacked the Church again. Has attacked it in a manner never to be forgiven. "In France," he had written in the *Voice of the Sage and of the People*, "where reason becomes more developed every day, reason teaches us that the Church ought to contribute to the expenses of the nation in proportion to its revenues, and that the body set apart to teach justice ought to begin by giving an example of it. That government would be worthy of Hottentots in which it would be permitted to a certain number of men to say 'Let those pay taxes who work; we ought not to pay anything because we are idle.' That government would outrage God and men in which some citizens would be able to say, 'The nation has given us all we have, and we owe nothing to it except prayers.' "

VOLTAIRE
(after sketches by Hubert)

The Church, which holds nearly half of the land in France, to pay taxes on this! The Bishop of Mirepoix who has enormous land holdings was only the spokesman of all the French bishops enjoying tax-free benefices when he exclaimed, *"I will crush Voltaire!"*

While Voltaire hesitates Frederick plays his winning card. There is a young poet Baculard D'Arnaud, at Voltaire's recommendation made by Frederick his Paris letter-writer and book-buyer, and recently brought to Prussia by the King. Frederick now lavishes praise upon his new acquisition. He calls D'Arnaud the rising sun and Voltaire the setting one, and takes care that this remark, put by him into verse, reaches Voltaire's ears.

Voltaire decides to go. Weary of his niece pulling one way and the King the other he promises to be in Prussia by July. But it is only to be a visit. He will stay with Frederick two months, then intends to go to Italy, which he has always wanted to see, from Italy returning to Paris.

"Sire," he writes, "you will see an invalid, a victim of melancholy, to whom your Majesty will give much pleasure but who will give you none."

At last! Once Voltaire is in Prussia, with Madame du Châtelet dead, the King feels he will be able to keep him here. "You will be received as the Virgil of this age!" Frederick writes hastily back.

And now that Voltaire is going, France which has done so little for him wants him to stay. All his friends are angry. The court disapproves. Even Louis, he is told, takes his leaving as a personal insult.

As a member of Louis's household Voltaire cannot go without the king's permission. He goes to ask it. Louis says coldly, "You can set out when you wish," and turns his back on Voltaire.

Shall he go or stay? At the last moment, when he has given his final orders to Longchamp, who is to look after his affairs

during his absence, Voltaire is tormented by doubts. But having promised Frederick, having taken money from him for the expenses of the journey, can he now change his mind?

On the 15th of June, 1750, fifty-six years old, sick in body, and wretched in spirit, leaving a trail of despairing letters to his friends behind him, Voltaire leaves Paris. Frederick has ordered relays of horses for his convenience. July 10th he arrives at Sans-Souci, the King's country palace seventeen miles southwest of Berlin.

He has gone, and France resents his going as desertion. Those who have persecuted him the most are the first to condemn his going. In the popular imagination Voltaire has expatriated himself—has sold himself to a foreign king—has left his fair homeland for a barbarous northern country of snow and ice. On the streets of Paris peddlers are soon selling caricatures of him and crying—

"Voltaire! Voltaire! See him wearing his big bear-skin cap! Only six sous for the famous Prussian!"

XVII

But in Prussia a reception that banishes Voltaire's doubts. The Frederick who greets him seems truly to regard him as the Virgil of the age and to think nothing too good for him.

The finest suite of rooms in the palace has been made ready for Voltaire. No sooner does he arrive than the Prussian nobility flocks to pay court to him. From Sans-Souci Voltaire is taken to Berlin where Frederick has planned a magnificent festival on the scale of those of Louis XIV.

The court-yard of the royal palace has been turned into an amphitheatre for tournaments. Three thousand of the big Prussian grenadiers line the arena and entrances. The King's guest attracts more attention than the King himself. As soon as he is seen entering a murmur rises—"Voltaire! Voltaire! Voltaire!"

The King's horses and carriages are at his disposal. Absolute

liberty is to be his. If he wants to dine alone he has only to say so. If he wants to entertain, the King's kitchen and storerooms are his to draw upon.

Frederick is still only thirty-eight, four years younger than Voltaire had been when he received the Prince-Royal's first letter. Never has Voltaire felt the charm of the King's personality as he does now coming from this other monarch who had contemptuously turned his back on him.

The King will not hear of his leaving Prussia shortly to go to Italy. Frederick has a sound argument to put forward. Has Voltaire forgotten the Inquisition?

Voltaire has thought of it, not without uneasiness. The Pope may have given him his blessing—but the Inquisition is more powerful than the Pope. Stay with me, says Frederick, and I will send you to Italy as my attaché, then you will be safe.

Stay for good in Prussia? At this distance from France, yielding to Frederick's persuasion, Voltaire wonders why not. Is he not growing old? In France, if he returns, may he not end his days in the Bastille? To his niece he writes—

"The King of Prussia makes me his chamberlain, gives me one of his orders, twenty thousand francs a year, and to you four thousand for life, if you are willing to come and keep house for me at Berlin, as you do at Paris. Reflect; consult your heart. I have forgiven the trifling polite verses which his Prussian majesty addressed to my young pupil, in which he spoke of him as the rising sun, very brilliant, and of me as the setting sun, dim enough. He scratches still, sometimes, with one hand, while he caresses with the other; but we must not mind that so much. If you consent, he will have near him both the rising and the setting sun, and for his own part he will be in his meridian, writing prose and verse as much as he pleases, since he has no more battles to give. I have little time to live. After my death you will return to Paris with your four thousand livres of dowry. If these propositions suit you, you will pack up your effects in the spring; and, for me. I shall go, to-

ward the end of this autumn, on pilgrimage to Italy, to see St. Peter's of Rome, the Pope, the Venus de Medici, and the subterranean city. I have always mourned at the thought of dying without seeing Italy. We should meet in the month of May next. I have four verses from the King of Prussia for his Holiness. It would be pleasant to carry to the Pope four French verses from a German and heretical monarch, and to bring back to Potsdam some indulgences. You see that he treats Popes better than he treats ladies. He will compose no verses for you; but you will find good company here; you will have a good house. The king our master must first consent to this. That will be, I think, very indifferent to him. It matters little to the King of France in what place the most useless of his twenty-two or twenty-three millions of subjects passes his life."

Madame Denis will not come. And if her uncle stays, she thinks he is making a terrible mistake. Frederick is a king—true friendship between him and Voltaire is therefore impossible. In Prussia he stakes all on Frederick's favor, and he may lose this. Voltaire sends her letter to Frederick. The King, in writing, reassures his guest as follows—

"The affection which your niece has for you wins my esteem. If I were Madame Denis, I should think as she does; but, being what I am, I think otherwise. How could I wish the misfortune of a man whom I esteem, whom I love, and who sacrifices to me his country and all that is dearest to humanity? No, my dear Voltaire, if I could foresee that your removal hither could turn the least in the world to your disadvantage, I should be the first to dissuade you from it. Yes, I should prefer your happiness to my extreme pleasure in possessing you. But you are a philosopher; I am one also. What is there more natural, more simple, more according to the order of things, than that philosophers, made to live together, united by the same studies, by the same tastes, and by a similar way of thinking, should give one another that satisfaction? I respect you as my master in composition and in knowledge; I love you as a friend. What!

because you retire to my house, it will be said that that house becomes a prison for you? What! because I am your friend, I shall be your tyrant? I confess to you that I do not understand such logic as that, and I am firmly persuaded that you will be very happy here; that you will be regarded as the father of letters and of people of taste; and that you will find in me all the consolations which a man of your merit can expect from one who esteems him."

Could Frederick say more? Voltaire writes to his niece that whether she comes or not he will stay. Frederick himself writes to Louis and obtains permission for Voltaire to settle in Prussia.

XVIII

Life at Sans-Souci . . . Frederick up at five, at seven dressing for the day, at eleven prompt leaving his cabinet to review and relieve his guard, formal dinner at twelve-thirty with ministers and ambassadors, (Voltaire is seldom present as he finds it fatiguing), at five man of leisure, writing verses, at seven a concert, Frederick playing the flute with his musicians, sometimes a quintette of singers, a man, a woman, three eunuchs, at nine the little supper party.

Voltaire through the day has been working on his own writings and correcting the King's verses. From nine to twelve in the evening he is the life of the King's supper-parties.

No women here. All are men and mostly Frenchmen. The King's little intimate circle whose business it is to entertain him after the day's work. Sometimes fifteen present, but usually not more than ten.

Maupertuis, President of Frederick's Academy of Science. A good scientist but a poor talker. The little eyes above the snub nose watch Voltaire jealously. Maupertuis has no wit, but likes to quibble.

La Mettrie, physician-author, the King's reader. Comes from the same French town as Maupertuis. Big, robust, and a jokester. Too lively, thinks Voltaire. "His ideas are fire-works always in the form of skyrockets. His noise is very amusing

for the first fifteen minutes, and mortally wearisome afterwards. God preserve me from having him as my doctor! he would give me corrosive sublimate instead of rhubard, most innocently, and then roar with laughter."

The Marquis D'Argens, French author and adventurer. Used by Frederick as his agent in luring French talent to Prussia.

Major Chasot, a young French officer, also a flautist. Had fled to Prussia when Frederick was Prince-Royal after killing a fellow-officer of powerful connections in a duel. Served under Frederick through the Silesian War, and saved the King from capture at the battle of Molwitz by impersonating Frederick.

Darget, the King's secretary, also a Frenchman. Was attaché to the French ambassador during the war. Had saved the ambassador—who used to accompany Frederick on his campaigns—from capture as Chasot had the King of Prussia.

Lord Tyrconnel, Irish-Frenchman, refugee from the lost cause of the Stuarts, and now French ambassador to Berlin. An enormous eater.

Algarotti, the Italian who translated Newton.

A German or two sometimes. Prince Henry, the King's brother, when not with his regiment. Baron Pollnitz, bottle-nosed survivor of Frederick William's beer and tobacco orgies—makes a good background in Frederick's opinion for the polite Frenchmen.

All present, with the exception of Maupertuis, are glad to have Voltaire among them. They have found it no easy business keeping the King amused every night. Frederick has emphasized many times that at these supper-parties rank ceases to exist—all are simply friends. But he has a disconcerting habit of sometimes stiffening. At these moments an uncomfortable silence. But Voltaire, on the first occasion when this happens after his arrival, remains cool and undisturbed.

"Beware, gentlemen," he only says lightly. "The King of Prussia has just come in!"

. . . . . .

Voltaire, here, and at Potsdam and Berlin, to which he goes with the King, is happy. Are the little royal airs which Frederick gives himself sometimes to be weighed against lettres de cachet and the persecutions of donkey-bishops? "I find a port after thirty years of storm. Everything is to be feared for me in Paris as long as I live. Here, I am sure of a destiny forever tranquil. If one can be sure of anything it is of the character of the King of Prussia."

Frederick has been generous. Whether Madame Denis comes or not she shall have the four thousand francs.

"You Parisians think that I am in Lapland; know that we have had a summer as warm as yours, that we have eaten good peaches and good muscat pears, and that for three or four degrees of the sun, more or less, you must not look down upon people."

Yes, Voltaire is content. He has organized a Court company of actors, Prince Henry comes to him humbly for parts. He is, as Frederick had told him he would be, the dictator of letters and taste in Prussia. So great indeed is the Prussian sense of inferiority to the French in matters of culture that when one day exasperated by the awkwardness of some soldier supernumeraries at a rehearsal Voltaire exclaims, "I ask for men, and they have sent me Germans!" all the German nobles laugh heartily.

The King of Prussia, greatest general of his age, surrounding himself with Frenchmen, writing French verses, talking German only to his servants! Sixty years later the situation will be reversed—this very year a child is born in Germany . . . Sixty years later it will be Napoleon, soldier-emperor of the French, who as he passes through Germany Paris-bound after his disastrous Russian campaign will find time to lean from his carriage window at Weimar to inquire eagerly, "How is Herr Goethe?"

All Voltaire's letters to Paris show his happy frame of mind. "He is a king, I grant," he writes of Frederick, "but it is a passion of sixteen years; he has turned my head . . . I have found

a conformity so singular between all his tastes and mine that I have forgotten he is sovereign of half Germany, while the other trembles at his name; that he is the greatest general in Europe; that he is surrounded by big devils of heroes six feet high . . . I labor peaceably in my rooms to the sound of the drum . . . I have not found here the smallest prick of a thorn among my roses."

Voltaire has been in Prussia three months when he writes this. Three weeks later, to his niece, he writes the famous letter of the *buts*.

"They know, then, at Paris, my dear child, that we have played *The Death of Cæsar* at Potsdam; that Prince Henry is a good actor, has no accent, and is very amiable; and that there is such a thing as pleasure here? All that is true; *but*— The King's suppers are delicious; we talk reason, wit, science; liberty reigns at the table; he is the soul of all that; no bad humor, no clouds, at least no storms; my life is free and occupied; *but—but!* Operas, comedies, carousals, suppers at Sans-Souci, parades, concerts, studies, lectures; *but—but!* The City of Berlin spacious, much more airy than Paris, palaces, theatres, affable queens, charming princesses, maids of honor beautiful and well formed; *but—but!* . . . My dear child, the weather begins to grow a little cool . . ."

XIX

Yes, a shadow.

A shadow cast by jealousy, intrigue, and ingratitude, in which Baculard D'Arnaud, the young French poet who owes everything to Voltaire, is the principal.

D'Arnaud sees now that Frederick had only used him to get Voltaire to Prussia. Can it be otherwise when he, the rising sun, is never invited to the King's suppers?

D'Arnaud, thirty-two, blond, tall, handsome, is a favorite of the Queen and the Princesses. Voltaire has felt them growing cold towards him.

D'Arnaud in his jealousy goes further. He corresponds with Voltaire's bitterest literary enemy in Paris, Fréron, "a worm from Desfontaines's carcass," as Voltaire biologically describes him. Voltaire's friends in Paris send him some of the insulting things D'Arnaud is writing about him and which Fréron is having printed.

Besides being liked by the Queen and the Princesses the young French poet is also popular with Prince Henry. At the time when Voltaire first hears of what D'Arnaud is saying behind his back both he and D'Arnaud are scheduled for parts in a play to be given in the apartments of the Prince at Potsdam.

"Can I," Voltaire asks Frederick, deeply hurt, "act at Prince Henry's with D'Arnaud who overwhelms me with so much ingratitude and perfidy?" He suggests that D'Arnaud, who is going to Berlin that day, be kept there on some pretext by the King until the play has been given.

D'Arnaud, thinking himself safe behind the Queen and the Prince, and that he will make trouble for Voltaire, asks the King boldly for a leave of absence. Frederick orders him to leave Berlin within twenty-four hours.

Voltaire is shocked.

"He was boy-poet to the King," he writes to his niece, "and his Prussian Majesty had written most complimentary little verses to him. What a treatment for the monarch to mete to one of his two suns!"

To dismiss D'Arnaud so abruptly! Unstable indeed is Frederick's favor!

A few days after D'Arnaud's dismissal Voltaire finds how completely he is dependent upon this. He discovers that someone has bribed his amanuensis to make a copy of the *Pucelle* —and that this person is none other than the King's brother, Prince Henry. The Prince coolly admits it, making light of the matter by promising that the copy shall never leave his possession.

. . . . . .

A shadow and not a passing one. Suddenly for Voltaire the Prussian sky turns a browning black. He has his law-suit with Hirsch and Son.

Voltaire, when he settled in Prussia, had no intention of becoming dependent upon the King's generosity. He was rich, but he had the expense of the Paris house where his niece lived. He meant in money matters always to be independent of the favor of princes. For this reason he soon began looking around him for profitable investments.

He did not have far to look. Before the war the Elector of Saxony, thinking to profit by a scheme similar to Law's, had issued paper money which had rapidly depreciated in value. Frederick, when he made peace at Dresden, had made it an article of the treaty that Prussian subjects holding these depreciated bills should be paid in full. Two years before Voltaire's arrival in Prussia, because of the speculation in this deflated currency and the protests of the Elector, he had forbidden Prussians to buy up Saxony notes, but the traffic still went on secretly as he knew, his own brother being not above making money this way.

Since, as far as enforcement went, the law seemed a blue law, Voltaire decided also to invest. Hirsch and Son, who interested him in the speculation, were Berlin jewelers with whom he had come in contact through hiring diamonds and other jewelry from them for the theatricals given by Prince Henry. If Voltaire would supply the capital, the younger Hirsch agreed to go to Dresden to buy notes then selling in Saxony at thirty-five per cent. discount.

Hirsch went, but bought no notes. Seemed from his letters to be using Voltaire's money for private business. Would give no explanation of why he stayed so long. Voltaire writes to Paris protesting a bill of exchange for forty thousand francs given Hirsch.

Now Hirsch returns quickly enough. He complains that the reputation of Hirsch and Son has been seriously damaged through this protest. Besides he has had to pay back the forty

thousand francs obtained in Dresden for the bill of exchange and now holds only a worthless piece of paper. Does he get nothing for his time and labor?

Give me back the protested bill, says Voltaire, and you shall be paid for your time and trouble. Also, that we may part friends, I will buy some of the diamonds you left with me as security.

Hirsch comes and goes, but fails to bring back the bill of exchange. Friend Hirsch, Voltaire reproaches him on one of these visits, I have had your diamonds examined and find you have immensely overvalued them. The diamonds I gave you as security, M. de Voltaire, replies young Hirsch, were not overvalued, but you have taken out some of the stones and replaced them with ones of inferior value. Voltaire stares—controls himself with an effort. Friend Hirsch, we will discuss this matter of the diamonds later—first bring me the bill of exchange. M. de Voltaire, I will bring it.

But he does not bring it, and at last Voltaire realizes, as the demands of Hirsch and Son grow more exorbitant and their tone more defiant, that the bill of exchange is being held as evidence that he had intended to trade in Saxony notes, so that blackmail can be extorted. Voltaire takes the matter to law.

What does Frederick, the philosopher, think of this?

"Write," he exclaims furiously to his secretary, "that I wish him to be gone from my dominions in twenty-four hours!"

Darget's pen does not move. He is Voltaire's friend—it seems to him monstrous that the King should suddenly turn upon his compatriot so. Frederick repeats the order. Still Darget does not write.

Frederick, as the secretary had hoped, grows calmer. He asks Darget what he thinks of this scandalous affair.

"Sire," says the secretary, "you invited him to your court. The case is about to be tried. If he is found guilty, there will still be time to send him away."

The King reflects. "You are right," he says moodily, "you are a good fellow."

The case comes to trial. Voltaire wins it. Young Hirsch must give back the bill of exchange. The diamonds shall be valued by experts and paid for at the price fixed.

But this valuation will take time. The case has already had too much publicity in France as well as Germany. Voltaire's friends urge him to settle privately with Hirsch, and he does so, sacrificing several thousand francs.

These first two months of 1751 Frederick will not allow Voltaire to come near him.

"I was very glad to receive you into my house," the King writes angrily. "I esteemed your intellect, your talents, your knowledge; and I thought that a man of your age, tired of fencing with authors and exposing himself to the storm, had come here to seek refuge as in a tranquil haven. I kept the peace in my house until your arrival; and I notify you that if you have a passion to intrigue and cabal you have come to the wrong man."

Lofty words. But the King also writes—

"You have caused a frightful turmoil throughout the whole city. The affair of the Saxon notes is so well known in Saxony that grievous complaints have been forwarded to me concerning it."

In these last two sentences lies the real cause of Frederick's anger. The King is enraged because Voltaire's law-suit has given publicity to the underground speculation in the Saxon notes.

Voltaire is a virtual prisoner in the royal palace at Berlin. With the approach of spring he wants to leave the city for the country but Frederick still withholds his permission. Finally, when Voltaire has written him a number of submissive letters, the King relents, though he continues to moralize—

"With the talents of the first genius in France, you will not cover the stains which such conduct will, in the long run, imprint upon your reputation. A bookseller Jore, a Jew jeweler,

are indeed people whose names, in no kind of business, ought to be found by the side of yours. I write this letter with the rough good sense of a German, who says what he thinks, without employing equivocal terms and weak ameliorations which disfigure the truth."

A friend speaking, or the King of Prussia quick to compel acceptance of his advice with force? For the first time Voltaire has felt the weight of the royal hand. When he leaves Berlin Voltaire goes for a short trip with Major Chasot through the German states adjoining Frederick's kingdom. In one village an album is handed to him and he is asked to write a line in it, with his autograph. The last entry, by a minister, reads,

"If God is for us, who can be against us?"

He looks at this thoughtfully, then writes underneath—

"The big Prussian battalions." VOLTAIRE.

XX

From France, letters urging him to return. Does he not realize now how fickle is Frederick's favor? All Voltaire's friends implore him to come back to France. But he stays in Prussia. In August a letter from his friend D'Argental sums up the whole situation.

"I have nothing to add, my dear friend, to what M. de Richelieu and Madame Denis are in the habit of writing to you, but I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of speaking to you freely for the first time. You know how much your departure afflicted me; I was touched and piqued to the last degree. But the pique has not lasted; the grief remains.

"I do not speak to you of what you have experienced in the affair of D'Arnaud, the lawsuit, etc. I should reproach myself for recalling to you doleful recollections, affairs which you have felt but too keenly and which are still present to your mind. The King, despite his wrongs toward you, is still the only consolation which you can find in the country where you now are. You are surrounded by enemies, by the envious, by schemers.

They compete for and snatch a favor, a confidence, which no one truly possesses. The King is a coquette, who, in order to keep several lovers, renders none of them happy. That stormy court is nevertheless the only place where you could live. You depend upon the caprices of a single man, and that man is a king. In a word, you have fled from enemies whom at least you did not see, to find others with whom you live continually. You sought liberty, and you subjected yourself to the greatest constraint. You thought to put yourself beyond the reach of envy, and you have only placed yourself nearer the envious, and exposed yourself to their attacks."

D'Argental admits however that Voltaire's absence has had one good result—

"People here feel the loss they have sustained. You are sincerely regretted here. Your return is vividly desired; but you must seize this moment, and not risk losing favorable dispositions by delaying to profit by them. You are too superior a person to be willing, from false pride, to persist in a mistake. You know so well how to correct your works; it is much more essential to correct your conduct. You have committed a great fault; you cannot repair it too soon."

Why is Voltaire still in Prussia? Because, as he writes in answer, he is deep in work. Through the spring and summer he has been finishing his *Age of Louis XIV*, writing new plays, commencing his Philosophical Dictionary. Also because Frederick has ceased to be king and become his friend again.

Voltaire's rooms are on the floor below those of the King. Short notes go back and forth between them, Frederick sending down verses for correction, and books on which he wants Voltaire's opinion, Voltaire sending back the corrected verses and the books with such notes as, "Sire, I return your Majesty the first volume; I am not the person who spilled the ink all over it." Frederick seems to be doing all he can to make amends for his harshness about the lawsuit. He has never been more friendly, more sympathetic, and when towards the end of the

summer Voltaire's *Age of Louis XIV* at last after all these years of preparation is completed and published, having immediately a tremendous success, it is applauded by no reader more enthusiastically than by the King.

But one day Voltaire receives a shock. He discovers that if Frederick flatters him to his face, he is saying very different things about him behind his back. La Mettrie reports a recent remark. The boisterous physician-author, much in the King's confidence, but at heart disliking him and longing to return to France, had been talking with Frederick about Voltaire, and the jealousy the King's admiration for him excited. The King had replied, *"I shall want him a year longer, at the outside; one squeezes the orange and throws away the peel."*

"I repeated these charming words to myself," writes Voltaire to his niece. "I redoubled my questions: La Mettrie redoubled his assertions. Would you believe it? ought I to believe it? is it possible? What! after sixteen years of kindnesses, promises, protestations: after the letter which he desired that you should keep as an inviolable pledge of his word!

"A King whose favor I did not seek, and who said he was devoted to me: why *should* he have made so many advances? It is beyond me: I cannot understand it. I have done my best not to believe La Mettrie.

"All the same—I am not sure. In re-reading his verses I came across an Epistle to a painter named Pesne: in which he alludes to the "dear Pesne, whose brush places him among the gods": and this Pesne is a man he never looks at now. However this *dear Pesne* is *a god.* He could well say as much of me: it is not to say too much. Perhaps everything he writes is inspired by his mind, and his heart is far from it. Perhaps all those letters wherein he overwhelms me with warm and most touching assurances of kindness really mean nothing at all."

Can he believe it? When Frederick smiles at him so affectionately each day! But a little memory that makes Voltaire wonder. When Darget's wife died had not Frederick, *the same*

day that he wrote his secretary a letter of sympathy, composed a cruel epigram on the dead wife?

A month later, Voltaire writes again to his niece—

"I am always dreaming of that *peel of an orange!*"

If he could only read the thoughts behind the royal blue eyes! They shine at him with such a kindly light, *but, but, but—!*

"The man who fell from a steeple, and, finding his passage softly cushioned in the air, said, *Good! provided it lasts,* is much as I am . . . I wish I could be sure of falling on to the top of my house in Paris!"

If he could only be sure La Mettrie told the truth! But after December 11th there is no longer a chance of knowing this. For La Mettrie dies from over-eating at Lord Tyrconnel's house—on a bet the robust physician devours a whole pâté of eagle, pork, pheasant and ginger, and passes away in a whirlwind of indigestion.

"I should like to have asked La Mettrie, when he was at the point of death, more about that *peel of an orange.* That good soul, just about to appear before God, would never have lied. He was the maddest of men, but the most frank."

So now the truth hidden only in those royal blue eyes—

"The king told me yesterday, in front of D'Argens, that he would give a province to have me with him—*that* does not look like *the peel of an orange!*"

XXI

For sixteen years the royal hand had beckoned—now Voltaire was to see it at last, undisguised, as a mailed fist.

While Voltaire dreamt of the peel of an orange Fate was already preparing to lower him into a bag with the philosopher-king, and two mathematicians for company, to shake this up, and see what happened.

Since arriving in Prussia Voltaire had sensed the jealousy of mathematician number one—Maupertuis. They were soon having word-skirmishes.

Maupertuis, jealous of Voltaire's versatility, put out a little book of moral essays. Voltaire reads it, and one night when the President of the Academy of Science comes to a supper in his rooms, says banteringly,

"Your book has given me great pleasure though there are some obscurities in it of which we will talk together."

"Obscurities! There may be some for *you!*" replies Maupertuis in an angry sneering tone.

Voltaire suavely—"I esteem you, mon president. You are brave. You wish war."

During the period of the law-suit Maupertuis does what he can to aggravate the King's anger. He spreads rumors later that he knows will reach Frederick's ears to the effect that Voltaire, tired of correcting the King's verses, had exclaimed, "How much longer must I be this King's washerwoman!" When the *Age of Louis XIV* is published his only comment upon it is that it reminds him of the "gambols of a child."

A little book entitled *My Thoughts* appears. Published anonymously, but written by a young Frenchman named La Beaumelle. It contains the lines, "There have been greater poets than Voltaire, but never one so well paid. The King of Prussia heaps favors upon men of talent for precisely the same reasons that induce a Prince of Germany to bestow them upon a buffoon or a dwarf." La Beaumelle, who knew how Frederick liked to ridicule privately the very men he made a gesture of helping, had hoped to ingratiate himself in the King's favor with *My Thoughts*. Voltaire is indignant. Maupertuis takes the attitude that he is reading an insult into the lines which the author had never put there.

Mathematician number two is none other than Madame du Châtelet's other old tutor Koenig, now librarian to the Princess of Orange. In the spring of 1752 Koenig has a mathematical argument with Maupertuis. To prove himself in the right he quotes from some letters of Leibnitz.

"Now," writes Voltaire to his niece in July, "comes the odd part. Maupertuis, having misread the quotations from Leib-

nitz, gets it into his head that Leibnitz was of *his* opinion, and that Koenig had forged the letters to deprive him (Maupertuis) of the honor and glory of having originated—a blunder.

"On these extraordinary grounds, he called together the resident academicians, whose salaries he pays; formally denounced Koenig as a forger, and had sentence passed on him, without taking a vote, and in spite of the opposition of the only geometrician who was present.

"He did better still; he did not associate himself with the sentence, but wrote a letter to the Academy to ask pardon for the culprit, who, being at the Hague and so not able to be hanged in Berlin, was merely denounced, with all possible moderation, as a geometrical rogue and a forger.

"This fine judgment is in print. To crown all, our judicious president writes two letters to the Princess of Orange to beg her to insist on the enemy's silence, and so rob him—condemned and branded as he is—of the right to defend his honor.

"Never before, surely, was there such a thing as a criminal suit in an academy of sciences! Flight from such a country as this is now proved a necessity.

"I am quietly putting my affairs in order."

Well may Voltaire be meditating making his exit from Prussia, for at the same time that he takes up his pen to defend Koenig, Frederick, who means to stand by the President of his Academy right or wrong, has taken up his to defend Maupertuis.

Voltaire, who has had the letters of Leibnitz carefully investigated, and proven genuine, writes an anonymous pamphlet exposing the injustice done Koenig. Frederick writes an anonymous pamphlet intended to prove Maupertuis in the right. This latter, however, is so badly written that disinterested Berlin mathematicians, in ignorance that the King wrote it, turn it to ridicule.

Frederick, who had entered the lists as a writer, finding himself defeated, now becomes the King of Prussia. He has his

pamphlet reprinted with the Prussian eagle, the crown, and the sceptre on the title-page. He forbids any further showing-up of Maupertuis.

"The eagle, the sceptre, and the crown are exceedingly surprised to find themselves there," writes Voltaire to Madame Denis. "Everybody shrugs their shoulders, casts down their eyes, and is afraid to say anything . . . Coquettes, kings, and poets are accustomed to be flattered. Frederick is a combination of all three. How can truth pierce that triple wall of vanity? . . . I too am unfortunately an author, and in the opposite camp. I have no sceptre, but I have a pen: and I have used it to turn Maupertuis into ridicule. The affair is unlucky. I have to deal with conceit and with despotic power—two very dangerous things."

I have no sceptre, but I have a pen. That pen, despite the royal prohibition, now begins to dance its way through the lines of one of the world's greatest satires, the *Diatribe of Dr. Akakia,* in which Frederick's President is run ragged with ridicule and finally dumped into oblivion in the line "when, in an author, the sum of errors equals the sum of absurdities, nothingness is the equivalent of his existence."

But how to get it printed? The King is determined that not another word against Maupertuis shall go into type. His reasons are that Maupertuis is president of his Academy, that he has married one of the queen's ladies of honor, who belongs to one of the oldest families in Prussia, that the nobility of Prussia are already indignant over what has been said about him, in short that he occupies too prominent a position in Berlin society for Frederick to permit him to be ridiculed further.

Strange reasons, thinks Voltaire, for a philosopher to put forward. Strange too that Frederick, his friend, should have recently resorted to the practice of having his mail opened so that now he has to send his letters to France by special couriers.

The King has his army, but Voltaire has his wits. He devises a plan to fool Frederick which will bring matters to a crisis.

His English friend, Lord Bolingbroke, had recently died. Bolingbroke's death had been the signal for numerous writings by ministers dwelling upon his debauchery in private life to appear. Voltaire, with whom tolerance always outweighs moral prejudices, except where conduct is inconsistent with teachings, as in the case of the priests, has written a pamphlet denying the relevancy of this argument advanced to prove Bolingbroke could not have been a great man. He has reason to believe that this pamphlet will be very acceptable to the King of Prussia whose private life, closed to women, contains certain curious corners much gossiped about for some time at the other European courts.

He reads it to the King, who as he had expected is delighted with it, and gladly writes his royal permit to print on the last leaf of the manuscript. Voltaire, having the royal permit, slips the *Diatribe* manuscript in ahead of the other, and sends the two off to the printer.

Meanwhile the King is not without suspicion that Voltaire intends disobedience. He questions him—Voltaire confesses he has written a little burlesque on Maupertuis. The King wants to see it. Voltaire, who now has the manuscript back from the printer, reads it to him. The King, despite his prejudice in favor of Maupertuis, is vastly amused by the *Diatribe*. But, having enjoyed it in private, he insists that it must be immediately destroyed. Voltaire, foxing for all he is worth now, throws the manuscript into the fire where the King watches it burn.

A few days later the Potsdam booksellers have prominently displayed in their shops the *Diatribe of Doctor Akakia,* printed by royal permit, by the King's own printer, in his own private printing office at Potsdam.

The King's fury exceeds all bounds. He confiscates every copy he can find (Voltaire, anticipating this, has taken care to send a number of copies out of Prussia), sends for the printer, and has a sentry stationed outside Voltaire's rooms when the

latter declares it a mystery to him how his Doctor broke into print.

"Your effrontery amazes me," the King writes to his prisoner, "after what you have done, which is as clear as daylight. You persist in it instead of owning yourself guilty—do not imagine that you can make people believe that black is white —when one takes no notice, it is because one prefers to see nothing—but if you carry this business any further, I shall have everything printed, and the world will see that if your works deserve statues, your conduct deserves chains! The printer has been questioned, and has confessed all."

Voltaire continues to take the stand that someone—he does not say Prince Henry, leaving this detail to the King's imagination—must have had a copy made of the manuscript before it was burnt. His guilt, as the King says, is evident, but he has no intention of owning up to it.

A week he remains a prisoner, which time he spends writing history and plays. Then to his door comes a pledge written in the King's own hand which Voltaire must sign if he wants his freedom back. The pledge reads—

"Potsdam, November 27, 1752. I promise his Majesty that, so long as he does me the favor to lodge me at the palace, I will write against no one: neither against the government of France, nor against the ministers, nor against other sovereigns, nor against illustrious men of letters, to whom I will render the respect which is their due. I will not abuse the letters of his Majesty, and I will govern myself in a manner becoming a man of letters, who has the honor to be a chamberlain of his Majesty, and who lives with respectable people."

Voltaire smiles. He rereads the pledge. *What! Because you retire to my house, it will be said that that house becomes a prison for you! What! because I am your friend, I shall be your tyrant!* When, in France, with a soldier standing over him, has he been asked to sign such a pledge as this? He does not sign

it, but writes underneath some submissive generalities, and sends it back.

The King, though he rages in his impotence, still has time for a reflection. His little circle of intimates has thinned during the past year. Lord Tyrconnel, like La Mettrie, has died from overeating. His secretary, Darget, has just gone back to France. Is he to lose Voltaire also? He takes away the sentry, but threatens Voltaire with a heavy fine unless he behaves himself in the future.

The Court moves to Berlin for Christmas. Voltaire goes with it but stays at a friend's house instead of at the palace. The threat of the fine seems to have brought him to his senses, and the King writes confidently to his President—

"Fear nothing, my dear Maupertuis—the affair of the libels is finished. I have spoken out so plainly to the man, I have washed his head so thoroughly, that I do not think he will repeat the offense. I have frightened him on the side of the purse, and it has had all the effect I expected. I have declared to him plumply that my house is to be a sanctuary, and not a retreat for brigands and scoundrels to distil poisons in."

But Voltaire's head has not been washed quite as thoroughly as the King thinks. A few days later Frederick is informed that the Berlin bookstores are selling copies of the *Diatribe*—Voltaire had not only had an edition printed at Potsdam, but simultaneously an edition at Leipsic.

Confiscate all the copies, shouts Frederick. They are confiscated. Now what?

Voltaire, looking out of his window, sees a sight he has often seen in France but never before in Prussia. A great fire in the street, a man (who looks very like the public executioner) tearing a book to pieces, and throwing it leaf by leaf to the flames.

"I think," he says softly, with a little smile, "it is my Doctor they are burning!"

XXII

"This act," writes the President of the Academy of Science triumphantly to his friends, "which is much more infamous here than in France, was done by the King's express order, with the great applause of all respectable people; and you could see persons coming in carriages from every direction to warm themselves by that fire. The same evening the King wrote me a charming letter, and sent me the ashes of that *Diatribe* as a cooling powder!"

The official paper of Berlin carries the following item about the deceased Doctor—

"Sunday, at noon, a horrible pamphlet, entitled, 'The Diatribe,' etc., was burned publicly in different places by the hand of the executioner. M. de Voltaire is said to be the author of it."

M. de Voltaire, what is he doing? He is thinking of *how to save the peel.*

"I am very well aware that *the orange has been squeezed,*" he writes to his niece. "As I do not possess here below a hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, I cannot pretend to make war. My only plan is to desert honorably, to take care of my health, to see you again, and forget this three years' nightmare. I am compiling, for my instruction, a little Dictionary for the Use of Kings.

"*My friend* means *my slave. My dear friend* means *you are absolutely nothing to me.* By *I will make you happy* understand *I will bear with you as long as I have need of you. Sup with me tonight* means *I shall make game of you this evening.* The dictionary might be long . . .

"And this is he who wrote so philosophically—whom I believed to be a philosopher! And whom I called the *Solomon of the North!* You remember that fine letter which never succeeded in reassuring you? *You are a philosopher,* said he, *and so am I.* On my soul, neither the one nor the other of us!

"My dear child, I shall certainly never believe myself to be a philosopher until I am with you and my household gods. The difficulty is to get away from here. I can only ask leave on the plea of my health. It is not possible to say I am going to Plombières in December.

"There is a man named Perrard here: a sort of minister of the Gospel and born, like myself, in France: he asked permission to go to Paris on business: the King answered that he knew his affairs better than he did himself, and that there was no need at all for him to go to Paris.

"My dear child, when I think over the details of all that is going on here, I come to the conclusion that it cannot be true, that it is impossible, that I must be mistaken—that such a thing must have happened at Syracuse three thousand years ago."

Will Frederick let him go? On New Year's day Voltaire returns the King his cross, the ribbon of the Prussian Order of Merit, and his chamberlain's key, accompanied by a letter asking permission to leave Prussia because of the bad state of his health.

What a New Year's present, meditates Frederick bitterly. He sits thinking. That Voltaire is not shamming sickness he knows —his lips are swollen with erysipelas, his teeth have fallen out, he has been in bed the largest part of the last months. But he knows also that this ill-health is only an excuse. So their sixteen-year friendship is at an end! No, he cannot let Voltaire leave! He sends the decorations back.

Again Frederick ceases to be king and becomes friend. But Voltaire is determined to go. He must, however, have a few weeks to put his affairs in order. He has invested a large sum of money with the Duke of Wurtemberg and he attends to the final details involved here. Frederick, seeing he will not change his mind, becomes King of Prussia again. Angrily he writes down the following orders for his new secretary the Abbé de Prades to incorporate in a letter to Voltaire—

"He can leave my service whenever he feels inclined: he need not trouble to invent the excuse of the waters of Plombières, but he must have the goodness, before he goes, to return to me the contract of his engagement, the key, the cross, and the volume of poetry which I have confided to him; I could wish that he and Koenig had only attacked my works, which I sacrifice willingly to those who desire to belittle other people's reputations: I have none of the vanity and folly of authors, and the cabals of men of letters seem to me the depth of baseness!"

This letter sent off, again the King relents. He sends for Voltaire—for two hours they are closeted alone together. What happens during these two hours?—no one will ever know. But in the clash of wills the King seems to think himself triumphant for a week of gaiety follows . . . fêtes, concerts, Frederick making a great deal of Voltaire . . . the old-time suppers . . .

XXIII

The 26th of March, 1753. Nine o'clock in the morning. A little stoop-shouldered man in a cocked hat stands watching soldiers march by.

It is Frederick the Great holding the last parade of his regiment before leaving for Silesia to inspect his fortresses.

Across one corner of the parade ground an old man approaches. He walks with effort, dragging one leg slowly after the other. The King sees him from a corner of his eye, and notes that he is dressed for travelling.

An officer's heels click.

"Here, Sire, is M. de Voltaire, who comes to receive your Majesty's orders!"

A glance. A bow. Voltaire stands before the King.

His lips are still swollen. His face is a ghastly white. Amid these stalwart soldiers he looks like some spectre of death who has silently joined the King to watch the review. He waits for the King to speak first.

So this is the end! Sixteen years of friendship have blossomed—and this moment is the fruit! Frederick's face is impassive, but he is struggling with memories. No more suppers at Sans-Souci . . . No more Voltaire . . .

Their eyes meet. What poignant regrets, what sense of tragedy perhaps behind the silent accusations . . . or perhaps only what bitterness, what rancor . . . Look long upon each other, prince and poet, for you will never see each other again!

The tramping feet go by. Frederick breaks his glance away. War! war! yes, he knows it is coming.

And only yesterday it seemed as though all was forgotten! The King's blue eyes harden—

"Very well, M. de Voltaire, you absolutely wish, then, to set out?"

"Sire, indispensable affairs, and above all my health oblige me to do so."

The royal hand makes a little gesture of dismissal—

"Monsieur, I wish you a good journey."

PART FOUR: *The Battle-Cry of Voltaire*

I

"PERMISSION to re-enter France is refused to M. de Voltaire. It is sought by this little article to please the King of Prussia, while displeasing him, as we do, in the principal things."

When the Marquis d'Argenson, French Minister for Foreign Affairs, made this entry in his diary, four months had passed since Voltaire and the King parted on the parade ground at Potsdam. What has happened in the interval?

Shortly after leaving Potsdam Voltaire had received a letter from Maupertuis in which the latter had reminded him of his French canings and had threatened to administer one himself if there were any more Doctor Akakias.

Voltaire had promised the King to write nothing further against his President, but this threat of physical violence released him, in his opinion, from the promise. If Frederick was sincere in wanting the quarrel dropped why did he not likewise restrain Maupertuis? He realized that for Maupertuis to write him such a letter, the King must have—as he had—congratulated Maupertuis on his triumph. He published a supplement to the *Diatribe* in which Maupertuis was made even more ridiculous than he had been in the *Diatribe* itself.

By the King's orders Voltaire was arrested at Frankfort, a free city, but close enough to Prussia to have respect for Frederick's authority. The cross and ribbon of the Prussian Order of Merit, and his chamberlain's key, were taken away from him. The King's agent, a coarse and brutal underling named Freytag, also took it upon himself to appropriate the money found on Voltaire and the contents of his trunks. Freytag further ar-

rested Madame Denis, who had come to meet her uncle, locked her up in a separate room at the *Golden Lion* inn, and having conceived the idea that she was not Voltaire's niece but his mistress, and noting that she was a plump attractive woman, established himself her personal guard in this room, to which he ordered wine brought, and where, with the key in his pocket, he suggested broadly that she bestow upon him some of her favors.

For twenty-five days uncle and niece remain prisoners, Freytag giving them only a brief breathing-spell when he hustles them from their quarters at the *Golden Lion* inn to new ones in the *Goat*.

Does Frederick think this treatment a little harsh for the old friend who as even Freytag admits looks "like a skeleton"? He does not think it harsh enough. "Men are broken upon the wheel who deserve it less than he!" the King writes to his sister, the Margravine of Bayreuth.

The gentle Margravine is shocked by such ferocity on the part of her philosophic brother. At times, in Frederick, their brutal father seems to come to life again. She has just received a letter from Voltaire. "He jests very piquantly upon the president," she pleads, "and I confess to you, my dear brother, that I was not able to keep from laughing while reading his letter, for it is so comically turned that a reader can scarcely keep countenance."

But Frederick is now King of Prussia, sceptre, crown, eagle, all the royal decorations. The man, who had felt a sharp sense of regret on the parade-ground at Potsdam, has entirely disappeared. Then, though he had only granted Voltaire a leave of absence, he had known in his heart that Voltaire would never come back, and he had regretted it as inevitable—now ungovernable fury poisons even the memory of this moment when they had last stood face to face.

Having finally given orders for Voltaire's release, he gloats

over the fact that from now on, for his disobedience, Voltaire will be a man without a country.

"Voltaire dares not return to France," he writes to his sister. "He will go to Switzerland, and wander from country to country."

Nor is he content with striking with the mailed fist. In that royal suite at Sans-Souci which looks out upon the beautiful marble boy, the *Antinous,* that royal suite to which Voltaire will never again send notes and corrected verses, the King releases his vindictiveness first in an *Epigram Against Voltaire* —"Voltaire, unworthy favorite of the Nine Sisters, is at length unmasked. Detested at Paris, he is burned in Berlin, cursed at Rome. If to be honored with the title of great man it suffices to be a cheat and an impudent deceiver, with the Brinvilliers [1] his name will be cited!"—then, upon hearing that the rough treatment at Frankfort had been the cause of Voltaire falling so ill that he had been expected to die, but had recovered, in an *Epitaph of Voltaire*—"Here lies Lord Arouet, who had a mania for pilfering. This *bel-esprit,* always adroit, forgot not his own interest even in making the passage to the other life. When he saw the sombre Acheron, he so caviled about the fare that the brutal Charon, with a kick in the belly given without ceremony, has sent him back to us into this world."

In France, what a triumph for Voltaire's enemies! Having incurred Louis's displeasure by leaving, it would have required great tact on his part, despite the temporary reaction in his favor, to smooth the way for his return before the Frankfort catastrophe. Now Louis turns to Madame de Pompadour, and says, "I do not wish Voltaire to come to Paris." To Paris, he tells her, but to France he tells his ministers, and Voltaire's friend, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, regretfully records the fact in his diary.

At sixty an exile again! Where shall he go? For a year Voltaire wanders about on the outskirts of France hoping that if

[1] A celebrated poisoner of the times.

Paris is forbidden him he can at least settle somewhere in the provinces. But there is no sign of Louis relenting. His most powerful friends, the Duke of Richelieu and the D'Argensons, warn him that nowhere in France will he be safe. At last, giving up hope, he goes as Frederick had predicted, to Switzerland.

II

And now it is that that practical shrewdness which his father had believed lacking in his character, that close attention which he has given to business affairs for the past twenty years, stands him in good stead.

Voltaire may have lost the favor of kings, but he is rich. He is welcome in the bustling little business town of Geneva, for he has a quarter of a million francs to invest.

So far his money has all been invested in annuities, bonds, commercial enterprises—he has owned no property. Now for twenty-four years he will be a great landowner.

To be safe from persecution he takes advantage of the geographical situation of Geneva and buys not only a large house in the republic, but one in the nearby kingdom of Sardinia, another just across the border in France, and a fourth in the Swiss canton of Vaud.

Kings have long arms! friends had reminded him at Frankfort, as a caution not to anger Frederick further. *So have French bishops!* had advised the Duke of Richelieu and the D'Argensons. Now, thinks Voltaire triumphantly, let kings and bishops try to catch him!

"I am like the Old Man of the Mountain," he exclaims. "With my four estates, I am upon my four paws!"

In acquiring these properties he has acquired also a new lease on life. He forgets the Prussian episode. He busies himself making alterations, planning gardens in the English manner. His health, so bad when he left Potsdam, improves now that he knows himself to be his own master again. Whenever he

suspects a relapse coming on he knows a sure way of making himself feel better—

"As soon as I feel the symptoms of an indigestion, I say to myself, *Three or four princes will gain by my death.* Then I take courage, from pure malice, and I conspire against them with rhubard and sobriety."

His largest estate is the one in Geneva, which has a fine view of the lake and the mountains. He likes it so much that he calls it Les Délices—Delights.

Here Madame Denis presides over an elaborate household. Voltaire has in his service a French cook, a cook's boy, a valet, a secretary, a coachman, a postilion and two lackeys—he keeps six horses and four carriages. He entertains on a large scale, everyone of note who visits Geneva coming to see him.

He also invests in a couple of pets—a monkey and a bear. The monkey he calls Luke, and after it bites his hand one day, Luke becomes his name for the King of Prussia. The bear serves Voltaire as public executioner—when he hears that a priest has written a book justifying the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, he exclaims, "Send me that abominable book, and I will put it in my bear's cage!"

Casanova, the swarthy Italian adventurer and amorist, who calls on Voltaire at Les Délices, finds him in fine form for repartee.

"At last," says Casanova, approaching Voltaire, who has just risen from dinner, "the happiest moment of my life is arrived: I at length behold my great teacher. For the last twenty years, sir, I have attended your school."

"Do me this honor twenty years longer," replies Voltaire, smiling, "and then do not fail to bring me the money for your schooling."

"I promise," says Casanova. "It shall not be withheld. But do you also promise that you will then expect me."

"I promise it," says Voltaire, "and would sooner die than break my promise."

Casanova joins in the general laugh. They discuss Italian poetry—Voltaire astonishes Casanova by reciting in Italian two long passages from Ariosto. Next day Voltaire shows him the grounds. At the end of the long avenue they reach a stream. Voltaire calls his guest's attention to it proudly. "This is the Rhone, which I send to France."

Casanova accompanies him into his bedroom and sees him change his wig and the little cap he wears under it as a guard against rheumatism. Voltaire takes him into an adjoining room and shows him a great stack of parcels, perhaps a hundred in all, estimates Casanova. "This is my correspondence. You see here nearly fifty thousand letters, which I have answered."

"Do you keep copies of your answers?"

"Of a great many of them. I keep an amanuensis for that purpose."

"I know booksellers who would give you a high price for these treasures."

"Be on your guard with the booksellers, should you ever publish a work; but perhaps you have already published something?"

"I will begin when I am older," says the future author of the Memoirs.

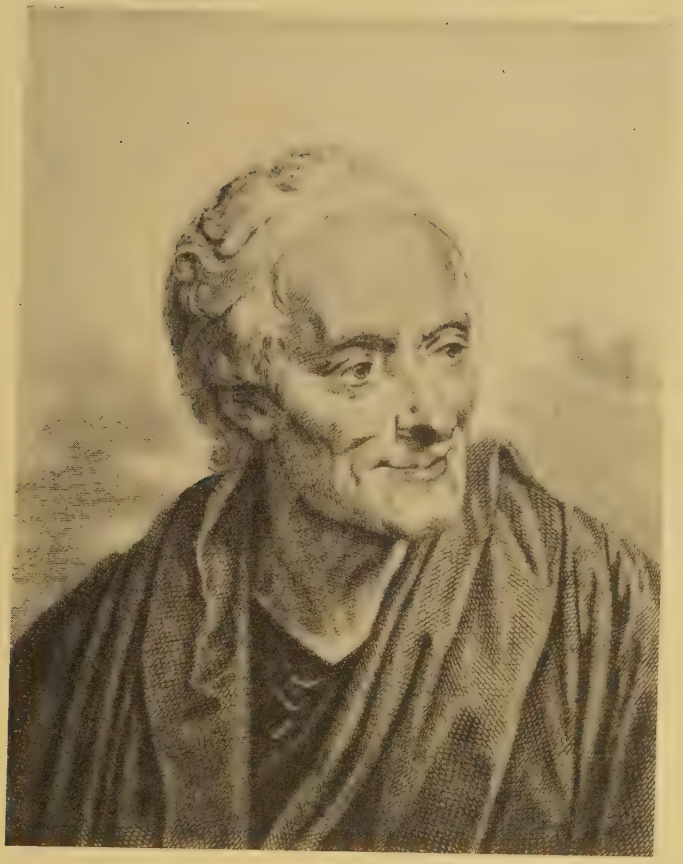
They discuss superstition. Casanova thinks Voltaire is wasting his time warring against the priests. "If you were to succeed in abolishing superstition, what would you substitute for it?"

"I admire that; when I deliver the world from a monster which devours it, I am asked what I will put in its place!"

"The world wants it."

"Where do you find that slavery renders a nation happy?"

They disagree on this subject to a point where Voltaire shows signs of growing angry. He changes the subject, asks Casanova who else he has visited in Switzerland. Casanova mentions the distinguished naturalist Haller, who dislikes Voltaire.



VOLTAIRE

"You must have been pleased with Monsieur de Haller."

"I spent three delightful days with him."

"I congratulate you. He is a man to whom we must bow."

"I think so too. You render him justice. I lament that he did not exercise equal justice towards you."

Voltaire laughs. "He thinks ill of me, and I think well of him. Very possibly we are both mistaken."

Casanova, who prides himself on his wit, goes on his way more than a little put out at having been no match for the old Frenchman, but with the appreciation of an epicure, not failing to note down in his diary that "it was impossible to keep a better house than Voltaire did. In fact, he was the only person in Geneva who gave a good dinner."

III

To Voltaire at Les Délices writes Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose mind had been first awakened by a reading of Voltaire's *English Letters.*

Rousseau, a Genevan by birth, is interested to hear that the Master has settled in the Republic, and begins the correspondence. But the pupil is already thinking along independent lines. Rousseau believes he has found a panacea for all the evils that afflict humanity. Let people return to a state of Nature and all will be well. Knowledge is a curse. Clothes, tools, the arts, the sciences, everything that is a product of thought—evil. Back to the simple life!

He incorporates these ideas in an essay which he sends to Voltaire. The canny eye of the Frenchman has already peered into the Garden of Eden. Had he not written the *Worldling* to describe the inconveniences he saw there? He reads the essay, and writes back to Rousseau—

"I have received, monsieur, your new book against the human species, and I thank you for it. No one has ever employed so much intellect in the attempt to turn us into animals. When

we read your work a desire seizes us to go on all fours. Since, however, it is now sixty years since I gave up the practice, I feel that it is unfortunately impossible for me to resume it. I leave this natural mode of walking, therefore, to those more fit for it than are you and I."

Ignorance and superstition, not knowledge, are responsible for human misery, claims Voltaire. "Great crimes have seldom been committed except by celebrated ignoramuses . . . Admit that neither Cicero, nor Varro, nor Lucretius, nor Virgil, nor Horace, had the least share in the proscriptions. Confess that Petrarch and Boccaccio did not cause the civil wars of Italy—confess that the badinage of Marot did not cause the massacres of St. Bartholomew, nor the tragedy of the Cid the troubles of the Fronde. That which makes, and will always make, of this world a vale of tears is the insatiable cupidity and the indomitable pride of men. I agree with you, however," says Voltaire cunningly, "that literature and the sciences have sometimes been the cause of much evil. The enemies of Tasso rendered his life a tissue of misfortunes; those of Galileo made him groan in prison at the age of seventy years for having known the motion of the earth, and, what was more shameful, they compelled him to retract." Again he points out the inconsistency of Rousseau, "Literature was of service to you, monsieur, at the very time when you wrote against it!"

Mehr licht! will cry Goethe. And light! more light! This is the burden of Voltaire's reply to Rousseau. But Rousseau holds to his contention that knowledge is the source of all evil. That to be happy men and women should revert to the primitive life of animals. That only Nature is good.

Suddenly Nature, as though a silent listener to this argument, interrupts it with an enormous laugh.

The great Lisbon earthquake occurred November 1st, 1755, at twenty minutes to ten in the morning. It was All Saints' Day, most of the population on their knees praying. Six minutes after the shock the city was in ruins, fifteen thousand peo-

ple dead, as many dying. Fire and disease then finished in Lisbon what the earthquake had begun.

The news of the dreadful disaster takes a month to reach faraway Switzerland. Voltaire sits thinking. Not only of Rousseau, but also of Pope, the crippled little English optimist, with his philosophy of whatever is, is right.

"If Pope had been at Lisbon," reflects Voltaire, "would he have dared to say, 'All is well'? Matthew Garo [1] did not say it even when only an acorn fell upon his nose."

What a terrible argument against optimism! For Lisbon, he thinks, this earthquake has been the Last Judgment, nothing wanting to it except the trumpet. But why, WHY?

"*All is well, all is necessary,* you say. If this earthquake was necessary, could it not, I humbly ask, have burst forth in the midst of an uninhabited desert? I revere God, but I love mankind. When man dares to groan at so terrible a scourge, he is not presuming; he is only compassionate. Oh, mockery, to say to people that the suffering of some brings joy to others and works good to the whole! What solace is it to the dying man to know that from his decaying body a thousand worms will come into life? All seems well to the vulture feasting upon the bloody members of his prey, until an eagle with rending beak tears the vulture in turn—then a man strikes the proud eagle with murderous lead—and afterwards the man himself, pierced with wounds, lies on the battlefield, bloody, upon a heap of the dying, and serves to nourish the devouring birds. And you cry, *All is well!* The universe gives you the lie. Your own heart refutes the error. What sad, what perplexing, truths! A God, you say, came to console our afflicted race; *he visited the earth, and changed it not!* A sophist says he could not; another tells us he did not choose to do so, but will at some future time; and even while they argue, Lisbon crumbles into ruins . . . *All is well!* . . . No, no! . . . *One day, all will be well*—this is our hope. *All is well today*—this is illusion."

These thoughts he puts into a poem on the earthquake, know-

[1] A character in one of La Fontaine's fables.

ing well that the priests will interpret the earthquake, as they always have natural catastrophes, as a just visitation of God's wrath. While he is writing it, he pauses to think what a terrible weapon the priests in their desire to dominate the human mind and keep it cowed and obedient to the Church through superstition would have acquired had through some chance the churches in Lisbon remained standing. But the Lisbon earthquake unlike those of Biblical times had levelled churches and brothels indifferently—the loss of life in the great stone houses of worship which came crashing down at the first shock being indeed proportionally the greatest in the stricken city.

The echoes of that enormous laugh cross the Alps, shake a bottle of wine from the table at Les Délices, and scare Madame Denis nearly out of her senses. "I have had the honor," Voltaire interrupts his writing to report to his friends in France, "to have an earthquake in my hermitage."

Rousseau reads Voltaire's poem. The earthquake, if it has destroyed Lisbon, has not shaken his opinions. This is the best of all possible worlds, he insists again in another essay. Only civilization is evil. Did people live in the state of Nature he recommends, there would have been no houses to be destroyed at Lisbon. How does Voltaire reply to this shallow optimism? He writes *Candide.*

IV

In this merry dreadful story of two hundred pages, spiced with wit to appear a burlesque, but in fact realism of realism, Voltaire undertook to produce evidence for his belief that "it is the eternity to come which makes optimism, and not the present moment." A chamber of existing horrors—this is what he made his little book *Candide.* A chamber of horrors, in which on every side tortured into a thousand gruesome shapes the victim is Man. A chamber of horrors, presided over by the shadowy demons of Superstition and Intolerance, and a Su-

preme Being, a Destiny, or a Nature, which, if not hostile to humanity, is at best indifferent to its sufferings. A chamber of horrors, from which there is no escape along the backward path of Rousseau's savage, but only through moving boldly forward to the Knowledge of the Superman.

But there were minor themes in the story of Candide besides this main one of the miseries resulting from wars, persecution, and the whims of fate. Voltaire used the characters for two other purposes. First to bring vividly before readers the appalling ravages of venereal disease. Secondly to arouse their compassion for the piteous lives led by prostitutes.

At this time very little was known about syphilis. It was still thought to have been brought from America by Columbus, was often therefore called the Neapolitan disease, as well as the pox. But if its origin was legendary the havoc wrought by it in Europe was none the less real. In the armies it killed more men than the enemy. It controlled the diabolical actions of insane priests and inquisitors, it governed the policies of idiot kings. As gout, scrofula, and a score of other diseases it perpetuated its poisons. The blood of eighteenth century France was a red sea swarming with invisible *spirochetæ palladæ*. Voltaire had seen courtiers whose faces were eaten away by it, he had seen soldiers, unscarred by wounds, but crippled by the pox. His own ill-health may have been due to it. No one will ever know whether his wretched constitution was the result of a tubercular or a syphilitic ancestry. He himself only knew that he had been born with *something*. From Potsdam during his second year in Prussia Voltaire had written to the French king's surgeon-in-chief, who had interested himself in his case, "I have lost all my teeth in consequence of a malady with which I was born; everyone has within him, from the first moment of his life, the cause of his death. We must live with the foe till he kills us. Demouret's remedy does not suit me: it is only of service in cases of pronounced scurvy, and none at all where the blood is affected."

Voltaire, a bitter enemy of the quack doctors who abounded

in Europe, was profoundly interested in genuine medical research. In his English Letters he had emphasized the importance of the recent discovery of inoculation against smallpox in England, and had tried in vain to make this custom in France. "Thirty years ago," he had written to his friend D'Argental as he was leaving Prussia, "I declared that a tenth part of the nation might thus be saved. Last year the Bishop of Worcester preached in London before the Houses of Parliament in favor of inoculation, and proved that it saved, in London alone, two thousand lives a year. That was a sermon which did much more good than the stuff our preachers talk!" And this other dread disease, over which preachers moralized, and at mention of which good people lowered their eyes, were not the miseries and suffering which followed in its train likewise the result of Ignorance? So into the story of Candide Voltaire boldly weaves a story of syphilis.

Candide, walking in Holland, meets a beggar "all covered with scabs, his eyes diseased, the end of his nose eaten away, his mouth distorted, his teeth black, choking in his throat, tormented with a violent cough, and spitting out a tooth at each effort." He gives him two florins, then suddenly recognizes in this human wreck his old teacher Doctor Pangloss. The Doctor tells him how it happened.

"Oh, my dear Candide, you remember Paquette, that pretty girl who waited on our noble Baroness; in her arms I tasted the delights of Paradise, which produced in me those hell torments with which you see me devoured; she was infected with them, she is perhaps dead with them. This present Paquette received of a learned Grey Friar, who had traced it to its source; he had had it of an old countess, who had received it from a cavalry captain, who owed it to a marchioness, who took it from a page, who had received it from a Jesuit, who when a novice had it in a direct line from one of the companions of Christopher Columbus. For my part I shall give it to nobody, I am dying."

"Oh, Pangloss!" cries Candide, "what a strange genealogy! Is not the Devil the original stock of it?"

"Not at all," replies Pangloss, "it was a thing unavoidable, a necessary ingredient in the best of worlds; for if Columbus had not in an island of America caught this disease, which contaminates the source of life, even hinders generation, and which is evidently opposed to the great end of nature, we should have neither chocolate nor cochineal. We are also to observe that upon our continent, this distemper is like religious controversy, confined to a particular spot. The Turks, the Indians, the Persians, the Chinese, the Siamese, the Japanese, know nothing of it; but there is a sufficient reason for believing that they will know it in their turn in a few centuries. In the meantime, it has made marvellous progress among us, especially in those great armies composed of honest well-disciplined hirelings, who decide the destiny of states; for we may safely affirm that when an army of thirty thousand men fights another of an equal number, there are about twenty thousand of them poxed on each side."

Irony—but irony which melts into compassion when Voltaire describes the later meeting of Candide with Paquette.

"Alas!" cries Candide, "my poor child, it is you who reduced Doctor Pangloss to the beautiful condition in which I saw him?"

"Alas! it was I, sir, indeed," answers Paquette. "I swear to you that my fate has been scarcely less sad. I was very innocent when you knew me. A Grey Friar, who was my confessor, easily seduced me. The consequences were terrible. I was obliged to quit the castle some time after the Baron had sent you away. If a famous surgeon had not taken compassion on me, I should have died. For some time I was this surgeon's mistress, merely out of gratitude. His wife, who was mad with jealousy, beat me every day unmercifully. The surgeon was one of the ugliest of men, and I the most wretched of women, to be continually beaten for a man I did not love. You know, sir, what a dangerous thing it is for an ill-natured woman to

be married to a doctor. Incensed at the behavior of his wife, he one day gave her so effectual a remedy to cure her of a slight cold, that she died two hours after, in most horrid convulsions. The wife's relations prosecuted the husband; he took flight, and I was thrown into jail. My innocence would not have saved me if I had not been good-looking. The judge set me free, on condition that he succeeded the surgeon. I was soon supplanted by a rival, turned out of doors quite destitute, and obliged to continue this abominable trade, which appears so pleasant to you men, while to us women it is the utmost abyss of misery. I have come to exercise the profession at Venice. Ah! sir, if you could only imagine what it is to be obliged to caress indifferently an old merchant, a lawyer, a monk, a gondolier, an abbé; to be exposed to abuse and insults; to be often reduced to borrowing a petticoat, only to go and have it raised by a disagreeable man; to be robbed by one of what one has earned from another; to be subject to the extortions of the officers of justice; and to have in prospect only a frightful old age, a hospital, and a dung-hill; you would conclude that I am one of the most unhappy creatures in the world!"

Candide, while written in a few days, and soon in private circulation, was not printed and sold openly until 1758. Meanwhile the Seven Years War had broken out. The Duke of Richelieu captured the island of Minorca from the English. Admiral Byng, who had commanded the English fleet in the naval battle, was called home to be sacrificed to the popular resentment; he was arraigned on a charge of treason and cowardice. George Keith, Earl Marischal of Scotland, went to Les Délices to beg Voltaire to use his pen to save the admiral. Voltaire wrote to his friend, the victorious Duke. The Duke of Richelieu wrote back vindicating both the character and the conduct of the English admiral, stating that chance alone had been responsible for his victory, that had the admiral not retired the whole English fleet would undoubtedly have been

destroyed,—"when two generals engage in a battle, though both are equally men of honor, one *must* be beaten: it is not in the least to M. Byng's discredit that he was." Voltaire sent both letters to England. They did no good. The admiral was shot. But in *Candide* Voltaire avenged his death. Tearing apart the adventures of his hero before publication, he inserted into them the following episode containing one of the most bitterly mocking lines he ever wrote—

"Talking thus they arrived at Portsmouth. The coast was lined with crowds of people, whose eyes were fixed on a fine man kneeling, with his eyes bandaged, on board one of the men of war in the harbor. Four soldiers stood opposite to this man; each of them fired three balls at his head, with all the calmness in the world; and the whole assembly went away very well satisfied.

" 'What is all this?' said Candide; 'and what demon is it that exercises his empire in this country?'

"He then asked who was that fine man who had been killed with so much ceremony. They answered, he was an Admiral.

" 'And why kill this Admiral?'

" 'It is because he did not kill a sufficient number of men himself. He gave battle to a French Admiral; and it has been proved that he was not near enough to him.'

" 'But,' replied Candide, 'the French Admiral was as far from the English Admiral.'

" 'There is no doubt of it; *but in this country it is found advisable, from time to time, to kill one Admiral to encourage the others.*' "

V

"Do not talk to me of monarchy," Voltaire had said to Casanova. "This word reminds me of despotism, which I hate as much as slavery."

This long war which Voltaire has waged in his writings against the tyranny of kings and priests, has it been a war

against imaginary evils? Is he as some of his friends think a crank on the subject, as the priests view him a mere monkey of genius amusing sometimes by his tricks but in the main malevolent? A muck-raker, a sensationalist who abuses Church and Throne simply for the purpose of self-advertisement?

January 5, 1757, as the King of France descended the steps of his palace to enter his carriage, a young man pushed his way through the Swiss Guards and struck the king in the side with a pocket knife. This young man's name was Pierre Damiens. In his pocket he carried a Bible. He was a Jansenist fanatic.

To Voltaire, who at the request of the minister for foreign affairs is writing a history of Louis XV's reign, D'Argenson sends an account of the attempt on the King's life.

"Go over the whole history of Christian assassins," exclaims Voltaire in his return letter, "—and it is very long—and you will see that they have all had the *Bible* in their pockets with their daggers, and never *Cicero, Plato,* or *Virgil!*"

But the punishment. Let us watch it administered with our own eyes. And while watching think of that swift sharp guillotine of the revolutionaries which will excite the horror of Europe, comparing it as executioner with the executioners of those Bourbons whose fate likewise will excite the pity of Europe.

Louis, the Well-Beloved, had received only a slight scratch. But Damiens is to die. And this is how he dies.

Scene: a square in Paris. All the balconies facing on this square, and many temporary structures, are crowded with nobility, fine ladies in the majority. For hours the crowd has been waiting, pushing and scrambling for the best seats. A gay chatter, the sparkle of diamonds, amorous glances, duchesses and princesses exhibiting themselves as though at a fashion show, refreshments being served.

Now and again impatient glances toward the square. Here a fire burns. Several tall men, muscular as Roman gladiators, stand beside a forge. Occasionally one of them takes out a

pair of pincers. It glows red-hot. He puts it back again among the coals. Four strong horses stand nearby.

Suddenly there is a craning of necks. Voices shout to the crowd on foot to give way. A small army of soldiers appears—in its center is a man accompanied by a priest.

Has Damiens enough life in him to provide a good show? For three months he has been in prison, undergoing torture most of the time. It is known that he has just come from the torture-chamber, where for two hours steadily he has been tortured to make him reveal accomplices. But Damiens has no accomplices. His mind, unbalanced by fanaticism, had alone conceived the idea of killing the king. He can only suffer and faint, revive as stimulants are given him, and suffer and faint again.

He looks weak, but he can walk. The dukes and duchesses, princes and princesses, settle back satisfied. The festival is about to begin.

The King's executioners seize Damiens, strip him naked, bind him on a table. They burn off that right hand which had held the pocket-knife. With the red-hot pincers they tear out pieces of flesh, and into the wounds they pour molten lead and rosin.

Now they are ready for the horses.

One is harnessed to each leg and each arm—Damiens is to be torn into four pieces. But what is this? The horses balk and plunge. They seem bewildered—instead of pulling away from each other they back up. The fine ladies lean from their balconies to call encouragement to the drivers. At last the horses seem to understand what is expected of them.

But Damiens has a strong body, and it will not tear apart. Permission requested by the executioners to cut the muscles of the joints. Permission refused. Again the square filled with the clatter of slipping hoofs, the shouts of the drivers, the crack of whips, the shrieks of Damiens. Still Damiens holds together. The interest of the noble spectators begins to lag. The festival is becoming monotonous. The fine ladies flutter their fans impatiently, become more interested in the gallantries whispered them over their shoulders as further thrills from the

arena seem lacking. Permission is again requested to cut the muscles. This time it is granted.

At last it happens. An arm is torn off. Now a leg. . . . But Damiens still lives. . . . Now another leg . . .

For an hour and fifteen minutes Damiens has been alive through this hellish torture, his groans and shrieks filling the square. Not until both legs and an arm are torn from his body, is the soul of Damiens free to leave the best of all possible worlds. Then, at last, he is dead.

The crowd disperses. The execution of Damiens remains a topic of conversation for several days. A spectacle well worth seeing, write the nobles who were present to those who were not. From their pulpits the clergy elucidate the moral lesson contained in the execution. Louis rewards the executioners with large money presents.

The scene shifts to the provinces.

In Toulouse a young man commits suicide. His name is Marc-Antoine Calas. He is a Huguenot.

A high-strung youth who has long felt the stigma attached to Protestantism in the Catholic town of Toulouse. He has wanted to be a lawyer, but the profession is closed to him as he is not a Catholic. He belongs to a dramatic company, and it has been noticed that he takes a morbid pleasure in declaiming passages dealing with the subject of suicide, particularly Hamlet's soliloquy. One evening while his family is having supper upstairs he hangs himself in his father's dry-goods store.

A crowd collects. Someone shouts, "Those Huguenots have killed their son to prevent his turning Catholic!" It is enough. The priests have their cue.

And the priests run the town. They have kept Toulouse Catholic—very Catholic. It is a Mecca for pious visitors who wish to derive spiritual profit from seeing and touching "relics." These "relics" include the skeletons of the seven apostles, the bones of children slain by Herod, skulls of

ancient bishops, hairs from the beard of Moses—all easily renewable from the grave-yards as they wear out or are stolen for souvenirs. In Toulouse the anniversary of St. Bartholomew is always a great celebration. Pictures are on sale in the Bible stores showing the Grand Monarch, cross in one hand, sword in the other, superintending squads of soldiers busy throwing Protestants on their knees before Catholic images of the Virgin Mary, showing also such details of the glorious Massacre as more soldiers, with joyous faces, plunging bloody swords into the bodies of heretic women and children.

Old Jean Calas, the father, sixty years of age, is sentenced to death. But first torture, to make him confess. He is bound by his wrists to a large iron ring in the wall of his dungeon, by his feet to another iron ring in the floor—the ropes are tightened until all his limbs are dislocated, his body being drawn out several inches beyond its normal length. Next water is poured down his throat until his body is swollen to twice its natural size. These tortures are administered cunningly, with frequent application of restoratives so that he will not die. Two priests stand by to note down his confession. But Calas will not confess.

Who is the temporal agent of the priests in this atrocious business? It is a fanatic named David, one of the magistrates of the city. He keeps rubbing his hands together, and exclaiming, "This is an affair of religion!"

Now old Jean Calas is taken to the scaffold. On the way, a stop is made at the cathedral so that the old man can be thrown on his knees to ask forgiveness "of God and King" for the crime that he has not committed.

Another priest waits at the scaffold. He sidles up as the others had sidled up, threatens Hell as they had threatened Hell, unless before death a confession. "What, father," exclaims old Jean Calas, "you too believe I would kill my own son?"

On the scaffold a wooden cross. To this the old man is bound. With an iron bar the executioner breaks each arm and leg in

two places. A priest offers Jean Calas a crucifix to kiss. He turns away his head. The executioner crushes in his chest with the iron bar and leaves him to die.

But in old Jean Calas also the will-to-live is strong. He lives for one hour, two hours. At his side stands the fanatic David. David's eyes are pin-points of red fury, he is foaming at the mouth. Again and again he shakes the old man on the cross, trying to make him confess. Calas cannot speak but his lips keep framing the words "I am innocent."—"Wretch!" shrieks David. "There is the fire which will burn your body to ashes! Speak the truth!" Weakly, Calas turns his head away from the stake beside the scaffold. David pushes it back again. The executioner, more merciful than the magistrate, strangles the old man.

His body is bound to the stake and burned. The two daughters of Jean Calas are shut up in a convent. The mother, a son, and a chance Huguenot guest who had been in the house the evening of the suicide, tortured as accomplices, creep out of prison disgraced. A younger brother, an apprentice at Nismes, a hundred and fifty miles from Toulouse, but for whom the long arm of the Church is reaching out to put also to torture as an accomplice, saves himself by flight to Geneva. The Calas shop in Toulouse is first pillaged and then burnt by a mob led on by the priests. All the Calas property is confiscated to the king.

This is the Thing that Voltaire has been fighting. From now on to the end of his life he will fight it, no longer intermittently, but continually.

When other people are shrinking back terrified this old man who humorously calls himself the Swiss Voltaire fearlessly declares open war. But he feels mockery alone will not bring victory. He needs something else, yes something like Henry of Navarre's *In the fight follow always the white plume in my helmet!*, a battle-cry for followers to rally around.

So he points to that monster dripping blood from its jaws,

and hurls against it his battle-cry—the greatest battle-cry of all ages—the battle-cry of Voltaire—

"Écrasez L'Infâme!"

IV

Crush the Infamous Thing! This is Voltaire's battle-cry, and he makes it powerful by repetition. For he remembers how Cato, who so hated Carthage, had ended every one of his speeches in the Roman Senate, no matter what the subject, with "I also think that Carthage must be destroyed!" until finally Carthage *was* destroyed.

So in every letter that Voltaire writes now, he inserts somewhere his battle-cry. He writes it out in full, he abbreviates it, he puts it at the beginning of letters, in the middle, at the end, interpolates it between topics of every description, scribbles it wherever he sees a vacant space on the paper.

"I want you to crush *l'infâme;* that is the main point—I am always interested in the success of the French drama, but much more so in the brethren, and in the destruction of *l'inf.*, which must never be lost sight of—My health is terrible. *Écr. l'inf.*—Attack brothers, skillfully, all of you, *l'inf.*—Oh, the lovely musical chimes that should end with *Écrasez l'infâme*—Shall I not see you, my friend, before I die? *É. l'I.*—Does the comic opera still sustain the glory of France? *Écr. l'inf.*—*Vive felix* and *écr. l'inf.* We will crush it! We will crush it—The older I grow, the more implacable enemy I become of *l'infâme*—How can you say that *l'inf.* had no part in the attempt of Damiens? Read, then, his reply: 'It was religion that made me do what I have done.' This is what he said in his examination. I am only his clerk. *Écr. l'inf.*—*Écr. l'inf.*, my dear brother, *écr. l'inf.;* and say to brother Protagoras *écr. l'inf.* in the morning, and *écr. l'inf.* in the evening.—Engage all my brethren to pursue *l'inf.* with voice and pen, without giving it a moment's pause. Your impassioned brother, V.—*Écrasez l'infâme;* it is the greatest service that can be rendered to the human race.—Ah! *l'inf.!*"

These brethren, who are they? They are all the thinkers of France who under the lead of Voltaire will overthrow the old régime and bring about the Revolution. The young men to whom Voltaire's *English Letters* had brought a vision of a new France.

But the zeal of the brethren often flags. If Voltaire has declared war on that Superstition which supports tyrants and drives men to fanaticism the Church has likewise declared war on the philosophers. The attempt on Louis's life had put a powerful weapon into the hands of the priests. It was easy for them to persuade the cowardly French king that not the Bible but the writings of such men as Voltaire had corrupted the mind of Damiens. Shortly after the attempted assassination the following royal decree appeared—

"WHEREAS, the ceaseless attention which the King is bound to exercise in maintaining the order and tranquillity of the public, and in repressing whatever could disturb it, does not permit him to suffer the unbridled license of the writings which are spread throughout the kingdom, and which tend to attack religion, excite the minds of the people, and impair his authority; and as the kings, his predecessors, have at different times opposed the severity of the laws to similar evil, THEREFORE, all persons who shall be convicted of having composed and printed writings tending to attack religion, to excite the minds of the people, to impair the royal authority, and disturb the order and tranquillity of the state shall be punished with death, as well as the printers, agents and others who shall have spread them abroad."

There were too many offenders for the death sentence to be enforced, but the priests had gained a point. Wholesale arrests followed. Printers were sent to the galleys, authors were branded and imprisoned. The Encyclopedia was suppressed. Voltaire's book on Natural Religion was burned by the executioner. Under this reign of terror the brethren quail.

Only the old invalid leader remains undaunted. Voltaire

urges the editors of the Encyclopedia to go on with the work. He starts on its way a legal process against the Toulouse magistrates who condemned Calas. He lashes with his mockery Rousseau who has gone over to the enemy by writing in praise of the Swiss ministers who have forbidden Voltaire to produce plays in Geneva. "What! after writing a bad play himself, he writes against the stage—he finds four or five rotten staves of Diogenes' tub, and gets inside them to bark at his friends!" He lays around him vigorously at preachers of every denomination. "Fanatic papists, fanatic Calvinists, all are tarred with the same brush!"

Courage! he cries, Stand firm! "To overthrow the colossus, only five or six philosophers who understand one another are necessary!" Is Voltaire an atheist? Never! The world is like a watch, and *the watch proves the watchmaker!* If there were no God, *it would be necessary to invent him!* But, no atheist himself, he realizes well the difference between the atheist and the fanatic. "The atheist is a man of understanding, who is mistaken, but who thinks for himself; the superstitious man is brutally stupid, who has never had any ideas of his own. . . . The atheist will steal a golden vessel from a church, in order to give a supper to his companions; but the fanatic will celebrate an auto da fé in that church, and sing a Jewish canticle with full throat while burning Jews at the stake." His purpose in this war then? some of the more timid brethren ask, bewildered. This. Not to stop poor people who want to go to mass or sermon from going, though gradually to enlighten them to the absurdities of revealed religion, but to rescue families from the tyranny of impostors, and to inspire the spirit of tolerance. "I shall never," Voltaire exclaims to a Swiss friend, when Geneva following the example of France burns his Philosophical Dictionary, "cease to preach tolerance from the housetops—despite the groans of your priests and the outcries of ours—until persecution is no more. The progress of reason is slow, the roots of prejudice are deep. Doubtless, I

shall never see the fruits of my efforts, but they are seeds which may some day germinate."

The priests are crafty, but they have met their match in this strange man who has stepped back into France, and is now living at Ferney a few miles from the Swiss border. Voltaire writes under a hundred different pseudonyms. He has a friend high up in the French postal service who helps him distribute his writings. He camouflages these writings with countless such innocent titles as "Sermons by the Reverend So-and-So, Address of the Pastors of Geneva, Thoughts of a French Bishop, Reflections of a Worthy Priest, Extracts from the Bible, etc., etc." He has some of them bound as catechisms. Confederates slip his propaganda into shop windows, under front doors, drop them on the seats of the public promenades and the benches of workshops. Worshippers in churches pick up what they think to be the Psalms and find themselves reading Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary.

Madame Denis grows frightened. She has tried, like Madame du Châtelet, to establish herself censor of Voltaire's writings, but he has got beyond her control. "My uncle is always at work. He does a hundred different things at once. I can no longer do anything with him. I am so convinced of this that very often I avoid reading his manuscripts. Age has given him an invincible obstinacy, against which it is impossible to struggle; it is the only mark of old age that I perceive in him. He is very kind to me, provided I avoid making the least objection to anything that he does."

Bombs, sniping shots at priests who raise their heads here and there, quick-fire, the roar of artillery. Smoke-bombs to conceal the manufactory at Ferney, as Baron Grimm calls it What time has an old farmer for writing? "Bullocks, cows, sheep, meadows, buildings, gardens occupy me—I have not a moment free!" Tear bombs to bring tears of laughter—and pity. The big guns firing salvo after salvo at those great cathedrals, before one of which old Jean Calas had been thrown on

his knees. And always the slow but steady advance upon the fanatic David.

Heads up, heads down. But suddenly one up, way up. Voltaire peers. What! Old Father Berthier editor of that Jesuit religious weekly which had howled for the burning of the Encyclopedia and Natural Religion? Voltaire drops his guns and turns the fire hose on the priest. "Narrative of the Sickness, Confession, Death, and Reappearance of the Jesuit Berthier." Head down, and kept down. But another one up. Again Voltaire peers. Ah! Pompignan, author of psalms, who has thieved from him the post of historiographer, who aspires to be a second donkey-bishop of Mirepoix by becoming tutor of the Dauphin's sons! For variety this time a few monosyllabic bombs. Over they go, The Whens, The Tos, The Thats, The Whos, The Whys, The Yeses and The Noes. The head goes down, but comes up again slowly. Voltaire throws over The Fors and The Ah! Ahs! "AH! AH! Moses le Franc de Pompignan, you wished, then, to make all literature tremble! There was one day a braggart who gave some kicks to a poor devil, who received them with respect; but a strong man came up who kicked the braggart. Then the poor devil turned, and said to the braggart, *'Ah! Ah!* monsieur, you did not tell me you were a coward'; and he kicked the braggart, in his turn, with which the neighbourhood was marvelously content. AH! AH!"

Voltaire is shrewd. He knows the great nobles are jealous of the increasing power of the priests, he knows also that these bored aristocrats are grateful for amusement. He spreads the report that his doctor has ordered him to hunt Pompignan a little while every morning for his health. He strikes boldly in one direction, and protects himself by flattery in another. When Pompignan's brothers, in the army, threaten to come and cane him if he does not stop making their family ridiculous, Voltaire throws himself on the protection of the Duke de Choiseul, now Louis's minister, and no friend of scheming tutors. "I do not know, Monsieur le Duc, what I have done to these Messieurs le Franc. One of them flays my ears every day,

and the others threaten to cut them off. I will take care of the rhymester; I abandon the bullies to you; FOR I have need of my ears to hear what renown says of you."

He has his fingers always on the pulse of the court. Louis is bigoted, but the Dauphin is more so. Voltaire is aware of the general dread that should Louis die suddenly the kingdom will fall into the hands of another Jesuit Le Tellier. Such remarks as that made by the king's physician Quesnay, "I much approve Voltaire in his hunting down the Pompignans. But for the ridicule with which he has been inundated, Pompignan would have been preceptor to the royal princes of France, and united to his brother George he would have brought back the stake and the fagot," quickly come to Voltaire's ears. Court cabals, and intrigues, personal animosities between priests and bishops, all are grist for the mill grinding away to crush the Infamous.

And Voltaire's versatility makes him a terrible enemy. Pamphlets, tracts, personal satires, satirical verses, fables, philosophical romances, epistles to ladies, exquisite little poems of flattery, letters innumerable, all in some manner attacking *l'infâme*, pour from the pen at Ferney which is guided by the Voltairean maxim that "nothing is so effective in crushing superstition as ridicule." Besides these, edition after edition of the millions of words he has already printed. If he disappears for a moment at one point it is only to spring up immediately at another. With the eyes of a lynx he watches every move of the enemy. When the priests try to drum up popular opinion against him by implying that the reverses met with by the French armies in India and America are manifestations of divine anger at the spread of irreligion in France Voltaire leaps upon the stage with the slapstick comedy of the *Scotch Lass*. . . . To make his position impregnable he starts building a church on his Ferney estate. . . .

Yes, the old man has become quite unmanageable. To Madame Denis he admits it . . .

"After forty years I have lost my patience. I am therefore

giving sundry little pats with my paw to my enemies, just to let them know that in spite of my sixty-seven years I am not paralysed."

VII

Meanwhile Voltaire has again become a correspondent of Frederick the Great.

Against this King, with his pathological dislike for women, three Queens had hurled their armies. One a Queen by influence if not by birth, Madame de Pompadour, the other two, Maria Theresa of Austria, and Elizabeth of Russia. All three hating Frederick with a bitter personal hatred. Maria Theresa to get back Silesia, and to avenge herself for Frederick's satirical comment when she became empress that "it would have been better if she had been left fewer documents proving her right of inheritance to the empire, and more soldiers"; Louis's mistress, because she has not forgotten the King of Prussia's contemptuous allusion to Petticoat III or Frederick's brusque reply, " 'I do not know her!' " to Voltaire when the latter, on arriving in Prussia, had presented her respects to the King; Elizabeth in resentment at equally insulting remarks directed against her by Frederick. A triumvirate of women determined to bury Frederick in the ruins of Prussia.

At the outset of the Seven Years War, after Frederick had suffered the terrible defeat of Kolin, and was meditating suicide, Voltaire at the request of the Margravine of Bayreuth had written to the King to dissuade him from this. The King, grateful for his sympathy, had replied, stating his mood of despondency had already passed. Thus their correspondence had been resumed.

While Voltaire made war on *l'infâme*, Frederick faced the armies of Russia, Sweden, Saxony, France and Austria. Voltaire could not help admiring the King. "That devil of a Solomon wins, and will continue to win!" he mutters after Frederick's great victory at Rossbach. Later, when the war again goes against Frederick, when the allied troops are in Berlin,

when Cossacks wade knee-deep through beautiful broken porcelain in the King's country palace at Charlottenbourg and tear pictures from the walls with their bayonets, and Frederick stands at bay in Silesia before half a million men, he again sympathized. But Voltaire has not forgotten Frankfort. One word of apology from the King to Madame Denis for her cruel humiliation, one word to indicate that Frederick will take at least half of the blame for what happened in Prussia, and their hands would meet again in genuine friendship. But this word never comes.

Instead, his niece insulted as Madame du Châtelet had been insulted. Frederick more inclined than ever to suddenly push between him and Voltaire the sceptre, the crown and eagle. On this subject the following dialogue, shot through with gleams of fond memories and pathos, between Voltaire in his manufactory and Frederick on the battlefields—

Voltaire. For twenty years you were my idol. But your occupation as a hero, and your rank as a king did not make your heart very tender; it is a pity, for that heart was made to be human, and but for heroism and the throne you would have been the most amiable of men in society. But this is too much, if you are in the presence of the enemy, and too little if you are with yourself in the bosom of philosophy, which is worth more than glory.

Frederick. Are you wise at seventy? Learn at your age in what style you should write to me. Understand there are liberties permitted to, and impertinences intolerable in, wits and men of letters. (An echo from the past. *For God's sake, write to me always as a man, and, like me, scorn titles, names and all exterior pomp!*)

Voltaire. Once upon a time there was a lion and a rat; the rat fell in love with the lion; and went to pay his court to him; the lion tapped him with his paw; the rat went off to his hole, but still loved the lion; and seeing one day a net spread to catch and kill the lion, he gnawed through a mesh.[1]

[1] Voltaire is trying to persuade the Allies to make peace.

Frederick. I received the letter from the rat or the snake, on the sixth November at the end of the campaign. . . . This is all a poor, tired, harassed, scratched, bitten, lame cracked lion can tell you.

Voltaire. You did me harm enough. You have embroiled me forever with the King of France, you have made me lose my offices and my pensions; at Frankfort you ill-treated me and an innocent woman, a respected woman, who was dragged through the mud and cast into prison, and afterwards, when honoring me with your letters, you mar the pleasantness of this consolation with bitter reproaches. Can it be possible that you should treat me thus, when I spent three years in trying, however uselessly, to serve you with no other object than that of following my manner of thought?

Frederick. There can be no doubt you did me the greatest wrongs. No philosopher would have tolerated your conduct. I have forgiven you everything and am even willing to forget everything. But, if you had not had to deal with a fool in love with your great genius, you would not have escaped so easily. Consider that said once for all, and let me hear no more of this troublesome niece, who has not her uncle's merit to hide her defects. People talk of Molière's servant, but nobody will talk of Voltaire's niece.

Voltaire. The greatest harm done by your works, is that the enemies of philosophy, scattered through all Europe, have through them been able to say: "Philosophers cannot live in peace and cannot live together. Here is a King who does not believe in Jesus Christ; he calls to his Court a man who does not believe in Christ either, and he ill-treats him; there is no humanity in these pretended philosophers and God punishes some of them by means of the others." This is what is said and what is printed everywhere; and while the fanatics are united, the philosophers are scattered and miserable. While I am accused at the Court of Versailles and elsewhere of having encouraged you to write against the Christian religion, you reproach me, and add that triumph to the insults of the fanatics!

This is Voltaire's greatest grievance against Frederick. He is hurt also that the King, like Casanova, gives him little encouragement in his war on *l'infâme*. "Your zeal burns against superstition," writes Frederick, "but do you believe that the world will change? More than three fourths of mankind are formed to be the slaves of the absurdest fanaticism. The fear of the devil and of hell is fascinating to them, and they detest the man who wishes to enlighten them. The mass of our species is stupid and wicked." The people, thinks Voltaire, always the people to blame! Kept in ignorance, they are then accused of the vices engendered by ignorance. The mocking smile curls his lips even more at another example of the King's curiously distorted mind.

"There is one passage in that Ode which only you could have written. To write thus it is not enough to have genius, one must be at the head of 150,000 men," Voltaire had commented on a poem sent him by the King, in which Frederick with that "rough good sense of a German who says what he thinks, without employing equivocal terms and weak ameliorations which disfigure the truth," had bestowed upon his enemies epithets similar to those used in his letters to Voltaire wherein he called the three Queens the Three Whores. "A man can write what he wishes with impunity, without having 150,000 men," replies the King sharply, "so long as he allows nothing to be printed." Voltaire detects the hidden allusion to Doctor Akakia. But what a philosophy! How smug, how docile, how hospitable to evil! To see wrongs, to expose them in writing—and then to bury these writings in closets, or throw them to the flames! Allow nothing to be printed! Much headway he would make against the *Infamous* if he acted upon this advice!

But they are both fighters, if one fights with the sword and the other with the pen, each is waging alone a struggle against tremendous odds, and for this reason, if for no other, as the years go by Voltaire and Frederick are drawn closer and closer together again.

VIII

And always that slow but steady march on the fanatic David!

At first Voltaire had believed Jean Calas guilty. That a fanatical father should murder his son seemed to him not improbable. Conditions in France were bad, but he could not believe that the Parliament of Toulouse would so cruelly condemn an innocent man. But a merchant who had been in Toulouse at the time came to Geneva and talked with him. Voltaire became curious. He talked with Pierre Calas, the brother who had found Marc-Antoine dead. He had a detective shadow Pierre to see if he always told the same story. He sent people to Toulouse to investigate. He corresponded with friends of the Calas family to find out the character of old Jean. At last he was satisfied. "I am as certain," he said, "of the innocence of that family as I am of my own existence!"

On this conviction he acted. In Toulouse nothing could be done. David kept the records of the trial under lock and key. Terror reigned over one part of the population, fanaticism over the other. But this fact, which made the rehabilitation of the family seem hopeless to many of his friends, only spurred Voltaire to greater effort. His money, his time, his genius, his reputation—he threw them all into the fight. His yearly income was now between $20,000 and $25,000,[1] and he spared no expenses. But Voltaire did not rely only on this. He circulated the story of the Calas tragedy in all the Protestant countries, wrote personally to all his friends here. From Holland, Switzerland and England subscriptions poured in. In England the subscription list was headed by the Queen, followed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, ten bishops, and seventy-nine lords. From Russia Queen Elizabeth, at whose request Voltaire was writing a life of Peter the Great, sent money, and from Lunéville, King Stanislas.

[1] Equivalent to four times this amount now.

Voltaire flooded Europe with pamphlets. He wrote his Treatise on Toleration. He supported the Calas family, sending the mother to Paris that her presence here might arouse sympathy. As he had frequently in the past thrown opportunities in the way of unknown actors and writers, so now he gave to an unknown young advocate Elie de Beaumont, one of the brethren, the chance to achieve fame by handling the legal side of the investigation. Let the Parliament of Toulouse continue to refuse to allow the proceedings of the trial to be examined —Voltaire would break down this obstinacy with the pressure of a higher authority! He deluged with letters his friends at the French court—the Duke of Richelieu, the Duke of Villars, Madame de Pompadour, the Duchess of Enville, the Duke of Choiseul—these, in turn, unable to resist his impassioned urgings, wrote to the Chancellor, the Count of Saint-Florentin, the man who must act.

"There is only one influence," Voltaire writes to Beaumont, "great enough to obtain from the Chancellor or from the King an order to send a copy of the record—the *cry of the public!*"

That cry—who knows better how to draw it forth than Voltaire? His heart swells with triumph when he hears that in Paris people are flocking to condole with the afflicted wife and mother. Tirelessly he praises his lieutenants, attributing to them the honor of the approaching victory. What! de Beaumont has already drawn up a preliminary statement of the facts which places three impossibilities in the way of Jean Calas having murdered his son. "I add a fourth impossibility!" Voltaire exclaims to the young lawyer. "It is that of resisting your arguments. I join my gratitude to that which the family owes you. I venture to say," he adds, the mocking light coming into his eyes, "that the judges of Toulouse owe you gratitude also, for you have enlightened them upon their faults."

King and Chancellor bow their heads to the storm. The Council of State orders a new trial in Paris, and the Parliament of Toulouse to produce their records. At the new trial forty metropolitan judges unanimously declare Jean Calas to have

been innocent. The Calas property is restored. The shadow of disgrace hanging over the family is lifted.

It has taken three years to do it, but it is done. "The finest fifth act the stage has ever presented!" exclaims Voltaire. "Philosophy alone has won the victory. When will it be able to crush all the heads of this hydra?"

But now, when in the enthusiasm of triumph friends advise Madame Calas to sue the magistrates of Toulouse for damages, it is Voltaire who holds back. If King and Chancellor have bowed to public opinion, he knows it has been reluctantly. Besides, the fanatic David, deprived of his position, has gone insane and killed himself by jumping out of a window. Better let well alone!

The wisdom of this policy is soon shown. Louis prohibits the sale of an engraving which Voltaire has had made of the Calas family in Paris waiting for judgment, because the project seems to have been "instigated" by Voltaire, because it will perpetuate the infamy of the Toulouse parliament, and because it is for the benefit of Protestants. This prohibition Voltaire with his numerous underground channels for distribution has no difficulty in circumventing—he turns over a large sum of money to the widow, and takes upon himself the welfare of the sons in Geneva—but it justifies his opinion that the royal temper has been strained to the limit.

From all over Europe congratulations come pouring in to Ferney. Voltaire answers them with a profound remark—

"I have only done in this fearful case what all men do—I have followed my bent. *A philosopher's is not to pity the unhappy—it is to be of use to them.*"

The real Voltaire speaking. The man beneath the mocker. The Voltaire who time and again has been plunged into despair over his own impotence, who has longed to be a man of action instead of a man of words, who feels a sense of futility when he compares with the short-cuts of the legislator the labyrinthine route of persuasion he himself must travel to accomplish re-

forms, who still chafes against that destiny which created him a notary's son instead of a king.

The practical Voltaire. The Voltaire who even now is planning a miniature kingdom of his own at Ferney to show the world how he would have ruled had he been born a king. The Voltaire who laughs at those who build castles in the air while there are still ruins on the earth. The Voltaire who hates war because of its shameful waste of human lives and the products of human labor. The Voltaire who advocated inoculation. The Voltaire who made Candide cultivate, cultivate his garden. The Voltaire who is never idle himself. The Voltaire who looks forward to the Superman rather than backward to the savage. The Voltaire who refuses to accept evil passively, who mocks at the present, at the best of all possible worlds idea, but who holds out the hope that it might be *made* the best. The Voltaire who insists that people, all people, have the right to happiness. The Voltaire who says—

"A government which could provide for all would do more in a year than the order of preaching friars have done since their institution!"

IX

Écrasez L'Infâme! Since the pen is Voltaire's only weapon he must continue to use it.

Another head of the hydra, dripping blood from its fangs, appears far north of Toulouse at the little town of Abbeville near the English Channel.

On a night in August 1765 a wooden crucifix standing on a bridge across the Somme either falls down of its own accord—the night is windy—or is pulled down. Suspicion fastens itself upon three young men. They have been seen not to lift their hats when a religious procession passed. They have been heard singing ribald songs.

One of these three young men, D'Etallonde, escapes to Prussia, the other two are arrested,

Witnesses crowd forward. Why? when many of them have never even seen the youths accused. Because the Bishop of Amiens threatens with hell any person who knows something about the fallen crucifix, or who thinks he knows something about it, or who thinks he knows someone who knows something about it, or who believes the three young men pulled the crucifix down, or who believes the three young men *might* have pulled it down, or who would not deny that since someone pulled it down these three young men are as likely to have been the offenders as anyone else—and who does not come forward to testify.

The Bishop's *monitoire* has its effect. The two young men arrested, Moisnel, eighteen, and the Chevalier de la Barre, nineteen, are convicted as quickly as accused. They admit to not raising their hats, and to the songs, they deny having pulled down the crucifix. No matter—they are guilty.

The Chevalier de la Barre is sentenced as the Bishop recommends to "the severest punishment known to this world's law." First to the torture ordinary and extraordinary, to extract the names of accomplices. Then to have his tongue pulled out with iron pincers, to have his right hand cut off in front of the main church, and to be burned to death by a slow fire.

Louis, appealed to, refuses to annul or even to mitigate this dreadful sentence. But because he has not run away like D'Etallonde, the young victim after terrible torture is beheaded instead of burnt, while the executioner, again more merciful than the judges, has only made a show of pulling out his tongue.

Voltaire is appalled. The very thought of mockery, his only powerful weapon, sickens him. "The moment for jesting has gone by," he cries, wringing his hands. "Witticisms do not accord with massacres!" What! these devils in wig and gown torture and kill a youth who at most deserved a few days imprisonment! "And the nation allows it! People discuss it for five minutes and then go to the Opéra-Comique!"

Again the attitude taken by Frederick amazes and saddens him. "The scene which has occurred at Abbeville is tragic,"

Frederick writes, "but was there not some fault in those who were punished? Should we directly attack the prejudices which time has consecrated in the minds of nations? And if we wish to enjoy liberty of thought, must we insult established belief? A man who does not make a disturbance is rarely persecuted. Remember Fontenelle's saying: 'If my hand were full of truths, I should think more than once before opening it.'"

This from the King so bold in war, who has emerged from the Seven Years War still possessing Silesia! What a strange man is Frederick—at the same time that he writes thus he responds warmly to a request from Voltaire that if wide-spread persecution of the philosophers begins in France he will allow them to found a colony in Prussia—conditioning this willingness to give them a refuge, however, with the proviso that they must "show deference to those who require it," in other words, to the King of Prussia.

For Voltaire himself is in danger. A copy of the Philosophical Dictionary had been found in the Chevalier de la Barre's possession and had been burnt with his body. The bloody finger of the Church is pointing towards Ferney. Voltaire makes sure his ways of retreat are open.

But even should he be driven from France he will still be a rich man as he has taken care that a good part of his income shall come from foreign investments. One eye always on the exits, he fights the monster. He writes and distributes a tract, *The Death of the Chevalier de la Barre*. He obtains Frederick's protection for D'Etallonde. He so frightens the judges who are meditating the same inhuman punishment for the eighteen year old Moisnel as was meted out to the Chevalier that they drop the case. For nine years he works tirelessly to have the civil rights of D'Etallonde restored.

"Our criminal jurisprudence is almost entirely founded on what is called canon law, and on old procedure inherited from the inquisition. Our laws are a mixture of ancient barbarity ill modified by new regulations. Our government is like the

town of Paris, a collection of palaces and hovels, of magnificence and misery, of admirable beauties and disgusting defects. Only a new town can be regular."

Thus Voltaire to Frederick. *Only a new town can be regular!* Words in which lies a prophecy.

The cases of Calas and the Chevalier de la Barre had opened Voltaire's eyes to the iniquity of French criminal law. He saw it, as he said, a product of the Inquisition. His war against the Infamous became now a war against judicial crimes of every description. For these were made possible, he realized, only because French law was in essence the same thing of antiquated and barbaric customs, and dogma, of which the Church was the most monstrous example.

Ferney became a refuge for the oppressed. There was never a time now when Voltaire did not have with him here, or living at his expense elsewhere, the victims of persecution in some form.

He did for the Sirvens, another Protestant family living near Toulouse, and accused of murdering their daughter who had fallen down a well, but who escaped to Switzerland, what he had done for the Calas family; this time his triumph was greater, for though it took ten years work to bring about a re-trial, it was a court in Toulouse itself and not a Paris one which then declared the Sirvens innocent. He engineered the campaign which released from the galleys another Protestant named Espinasse, unjustly sentenced. He rescued from a horrible death the wife of a snuff-maker named Montbailli, broken on the wheel as a parricide, and who would have suffered the same fate as an accomplice in the murder of Montbailli's mother, an old woman who had dropped dead from apoplexy, had not the Patriarch of Ferney interfered. He wrote in defense of the Count de Lally, a French general sacrificed to the resentment of the share-holders in the French East India Company, as Admiral Byng had been to that of the English public, for allowing himself to be defeated by Clive in India. He defended the Protestant wife of a Catholic officer in the French army who had

been divorced and thrown penniless on the world, and could obtain no redress from the Catholic courts.

Besides these individual cases and many others, Voltaire inundated France with pamphlets exposing the terrible condition of French prisons, wrote others denouncing the whole system of torture, and in a hundred different ways called attention to the infamy of the national criminal procedure. . . . Before such ceaseless activity Frederick's skepticism vanished. . . . The King frankly laid his admiration at the feet of his old master, crying,

"The nations will write in their annals that Voltaire was the promoter of that revolution in the human mind which took place in the nineteenth century! Who would have said in the twelfth century that the light which lightened the world would come from a little village called Ferney?"

X

A miserable little village Ferney had been when Voltaire first went to it. Here in wretched hovels on marshy unproductive land lived a few peasants.

Voltaire set to work creating his little kingdom. He reclaimed land, built new houses, established a weaving and a watchmaking colony.

While he fought the Infamous he was also an enterprising business man, selling watches and stockings.

He has distinguished clients. The Duchesse de Choiseul wears the first silk stockings woven on the Ferney looms. Catherine II, the new empress of Russia, and one of Voltaire's greatest admirers, writes to him to "send me watches of every kind, to the value of some thousand roubles; I will take them all."

"Give me a fair chance," Voltaire exclaims gleefully to the Duke of Richelieu, as his industrial colony begins to thrive, "and I am the man to build a city!"

His stockings he sells mostly in France, but the watches and clocks of Ferney are soon known throughout the world. Three years after he first gives an exile to some persecuted watch-

makers of Geneva they are being exported annually to Spain, Algiers, Italy, Russia, Holland, Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, America and China. In 1773 he sells four thousand watches alone, worth half a million francs, and the stock, materials, and machinery at the Royal Manufactory of Ferney as he has tactfully called it to obtain the patronage of the King of France are worth half a million francs.

How does Voltaire build up this astonishing business in so short a time? By advertising it among his friends as tirelessly as he advertises his determination to crush *L'Infâme*.

No letter leaves Ferney in which he does not mention either watches or stockings. He sends complimentary pairs of stockings to great ladies, he makes presents of beautiful jeweled watches to ambassadors.

Whether the subject of the letter be poetry, or drama, or *l'infâme*, it is sure to contain somewhere the suggestion that an order for watches or stockings would be much appreciated by the Old Invalid of Ferney.

The few wretched hovels become a hundred comfortable houses. These belong to the tenants—the terms of the sale being that the tenants pay Voltaire a rent of six percent of the cost during his life, and a reduced rent of three percent to Madame Denis after his death.

A small town, but a happy one. Voltaire is proudest of the spirit of religious tolerance which due to his influence exists in Ferney. Here, if nowhere else in France, *l'infâme* is crushed. Catholics and Swiss Protestants work side by side in the shops. "When a Catholic is sick," cries the Patriarch delightedly, "Protestants go to take care of him, and in their turn receive from him the same assistance!"

In the mocking Voltairean manner he comments lightly in his letters upon his own share in the success of the colony—

"I have done it all from pure vanity. God, as we are assured, made all things for his own glory. We must imitate him as far as we can."

. . . . . .

Glimpses of Voltaire at Ferney . . .

Digging in the small field which following the advice given by his Candide he cultivates with his own hands. . . . Writing in the shade of the ancient linden which he calls his cabinet . . .

Playing chess with Father Adam, the Jesuit priest to whom he had given a refuge when in 1764 the Jesuits, for meddling too much in politics, were ordered out of France. For thirteen years Father Adam makes his home at Ferney. He has a quarrelsome disposition, but makes a good chess-partner, though Voltaire admits to the friends who ask him why he does not put the Jesuit to work in some way that "this Adam is not the first man of the world."

Contemplating with dismay the mountain of mail which arrives at Ferney each day. There are letters from unknown admirers, other letters threatening his life, manuscripts sent him for correction or for his opinion, begging letters. One forwarded from the Paris post-office bears the address, "To the Prince of Poets, Perpetual Phenomenon of Glory, Philosopher of the Nations, Mercury of Europe, Orator of his Native Land, Promoter of Citizens, Historian of Kings, Panegyrist of Heroes, Critic of the Critics, Arbiter of Taste, Painter in all the Styles, the Same at every Age, Protector of the Arts, Benefactor of Talents as well as of True Merit, Admirer of Genius, Scourge of Persecutors, Enemy of Fanatics, Defender of the Oppressed, Father of Orphans, Model for the Rich, Support of the Indigent, Example of the Sublime Virtues!" Voltaire smiles when he opens this letter and finds it comes from an Abbé, in prison for debt, who would like a little help. Another arrives from the burgomaster of a town in Holland who wants Voltaire, as a friend, to let him know definitely and by return mail if there is a God, whether, in case there is, he likes the Dutch, if a piece of wood can think, if the soul is immortal. Finally, overwhelmed by the increasing bulk of this strange correspondence, Voltaire has a notice inserted in the Paris *Mercury* stating that "on account of the immense number of letters and packages

received it has become necessary to decline receiving all that do not come from persons with whom M. de Voltaire has the honor to be acquainted."

Dismayed likewise at the crowds of visitors who come to Ferney, and to whom, as there is no hotel here he feels himself bound to offer hospitality. "I am the Inn-Keeper of Europe!" Voltaire exclaims. For the most part he receives these visits in good-humor, but sometimes the old man is tired and irritable. "I pray God to deliver me from my friends! As to my enemies, I charge myself with them."

Whip in hand, calling out, "To the chase! To the chase!" The visitors gather around him bewildered. He leads them around the house to brush down cobwebs.

Having dinner with an admirer. "If you subtract pride from priests," remarks the guest, "nothing remains." Voltaire looks up from his eating. "Then, sir, you count gluttony nothing?"

Standing between two tall young men, sons of an old friend, long dead, Voltaire takes a hand of each. "Mon Dieu! how happy I am to find myself between two Falkeners!"

Sitting in his Persian dressing-gown listening to a group of ladies telling stories of robbers. His face wears the abstract, almost imbecile expression which characterizes it often when he is a listener. It is Voltaire's turn now. What exciting tale about robbers will he have to tell? "Ladies, once upon a time there was a farmer-general. By my faith, I have forgotten the rest."

Listening with that same vacant expression to a torrent of admiration pouring from the mouth of a stranger. "Monseigneur," the stranger caps his homage, "when I see you, I see the great candle which lights the universe!"—"Quick, Madame Denis," calls Voltaire, "bring a pair of snuffers!"

Angry at being interrupted by another stranger, calling to his servant. "Tell him I am sick!" The stranger calls next day to see if he is better. "Tell him I am dying!" The stranger calls again. "Tell him I am dead and buried!"

But delighted with the repartee of a third visitor. "Tell him I am not at home!"—"But I hear his voice."—"Tell him,

then, that I am sick!"—"I will feel his pulse; I am of the trade."—"Say that I am dead!"—"I will bury him; it will not be the first, for I am a doctor."—"This is a very obstinate man; let him enter!" The stranger presents himself. "Well, sir, you take me, then, for a curious beast."—"Yes, monsieur, for the phoenix."—"Very well; know, then, that it costs twelve sous to see me."—"Here are twenty-four, and I will come back tomorrow." This stranger invited to stay as long as he pleases.

Scolding Cramer, his Genevan publisher, a man of very fine physique, who is taking the part of a king in a rehearsal of one of Voltaire's plays, to be given in the theatre he has built at Ferney. "Cramer, you lived like a prince during the first four acts, but in the fifth you die like a bookseller!" Doctor Tronchin, the famous Genevan physician, who looks after Voltaire's health when he is not attending European royalty, hints to Voltaire that he ought to be more patient. "I pray you, doctor," replies Voltaire, "when you have any kings to kill, kill them your own way, but let me kill mine as I please."

Walking one day through his gardens with the son of Marshal Villars. A storm comes up. Voltaire keeps turning his thin face up to the sky, a curious expression in his eyes. "Are you then afraid of the thunder, Mr. Philosopher?"—"Yes; and I am still more afraid of the priests and monks, considering all the advantages they would derive from my death. They would say from their pulpits that God had stricken me with lightning only because I had ridiculed *them*. The foolish people would believe them, and the progress of philosophy would be put back half a century. Let us go into the house."

All the visitors to Ferney are amazed by the old man's vitality. One of them, Dr. Burney, an Englishman, reports, "It is not easy to conceive it possible for life to subsist in a form so nearly composed of mere skin and bone. But his eyes and whole countenance are still full of fire, and though so emaciated, a more lively expression cannot be imagined."

. . . . . .

Voltaire himself is both amused and touched when in his seventy-sixth year it is proposed that Pigalle, the most famous sculptor of the day, make a statue of him.

"To model me successfully I ought to have a face," he protests, "and the place where it was can hardly be guessed. My eyes are sunk three inches, my cheeks are of old parchment badly stuck upon bones that hold to nothing, the few teeth I had are gone."

At first he opposes the scheme. And when he accepts, it is in the character of the leader whose battle-cry has rallied, and is still rallying, around him the enemies of *l'infâme*. "Perhaps it will strike another blow at fanaticism and at the base minions of that monster. Perhaps under this marble you crush superstition."

Subscriptions for the statue pour in from all Europe, Frederick, Catharine of Russia, all his royal and noble friends, besides countless lesser people, sending in contributions.

Shall it be a nude, or shall Voltaire go down to posterity wearing his large old-fashioned wig, his velvet breeches, his shoes with the big silver buckles, and his white silk stockings of Ferney manufacture? Voltaire himself favors the latter, but he leaves the decision to the sculptor. "Naked or clothed, it makes little difference. I shall not inspire any dishonest ideas in the ladies however I may be presented to them."

The sculptor favors the nude—a Voltaire seated. The local excitement over this event makes the Patriarch of Ferney smile his toothless grin.

"When the villagers here saw Pigalle getting out some of the tools of his craft, 'Come along!' they cried, 'he is going to be dissected!' "

XI

Voltaire's sun is beginning to set, but the skies are ablaze with its glory. He has become the Man of the Age.

In faraway Virginia and Massachusetts people are reading his books. In Russia Catharine the Great abolishes torture, has herself vaccinated to make this custom in Russia, creates a Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences, founds libraries and schools. Stirred by Voltaire's battle-cry, she has not only become his Russian lieutenant in the war against superstition but also helps him with money to champion in France the individual cases of persecution. She calls herself frankly his pupil.

"Since the year 1746, when I became mistress of my own time, I have been under the greatest obligations to you. Before that period I read nothing but romances; but by chance your works fell into my hands, and ever since I have not ceased to read them, and I have desired no books which were not as well written as yours, or as instructive. But where can I find such? I return continually to the creator of my taste, as to my dearest amusement. Assuredly, monsieur, if I have any knowledge, it is to you that I owe it."

She buys his watches and clocks, helps him in his trading with China, directs the governor of Siberia to send him seeds of Siberian cedars to plant in his park, makes him presents of magnificent furs.

Another benevolent despot grows sad when he realizes that Voltaire can have not much longer to live. Frederick sends to Ferney cases of beautiful china. His name heads the list of subscribers for Pigalle's statue. He has the royal porcelain works manufacture a bust of Voltaire, with on the base the word IMMORTALI. "They cannot be turned out fast enough to supply the demand!" he writes to Voltaire.

This renewal of their friendship casts a glory over Voltaire's last years. King and philosopher do not want to meet again, for they know that they will quarrel. But each, with the passage of years, has come to understand the other better.

At Sans-Souci the King sits dreaming. How time has flown! "I perceive with regret that it is nearly twenty years since you

left here. Your memory doubtless recalls me to your imagination such as I was then. But if you saw me, instead of finding a young man who looked as if he was at a ball, you would find only a feeble and decrepit old man. Yes, I am growing prodigiously old, my dear Voltaire. My stomach hardly digests at all and I have been forced to give up supper parties. My hair is going white, I am losing my teeth, my legs are ruined with gout. Every day I lose a particle of my existence and every day I travel imperceptibly towards that dwelling place from which no one has brought back news."

So long, so long ago! In Frederick, the King and the Man struggle. The Man looks up and says—"I know very well I have faults, great faults. I assure you I do not treat myself gently and that I forgive myself nothing when I speak to myself."

"I always remember," replies Voltaire, "that my greatest passion was to please you—now it is not to displease you. Everything grows weaker with age. The more we feel our decay, the more modest we become."

Frederick's hand reaches out through space, Voltaire grips it—the aging King and the old philosopher stand looking at each other sadly.

Tears are in the eyes of both. Why, thinks Voltaire, had he not been more patient with this King in whose veins runs the angry blood of his father? Why, thinks Frederick, had he not been more tolerant towards the irritabilities of this genius whose every step upward has been won only through fighting, whose body since birth has been harassed by disease? Cruel indeed the fate which brought them, who have so much in common, together only for that tragic quarrel!

"Whatever happens," exclaims Frederick, "I have been your contemporary! I have lived in the age of Voltaire!"

"Sire," answers Voltaire, "I feel a joy mingled with tenderness when strangers who come to see me bow before your portrait, saying, 'So this is that great man!' "

As they had once exchanged poetry so they now exchange reports on more practical affairs. Voltaire gives the King details of the progress of his industrial colony, talks to him of his large farm at Ferney. The King replies with news of what he is doing in Prussia and Silesia in the way of draining land, of his experiments with English ploughs and corn-drills, tells Voltaire also how he has abolished serfdom in Prussia.

Voltaire sends Frederick some of his new writings. The King exclaims, "What variety, what knowledge, what profundity! And what art to treat so many subjects with the same charm! In your hands everything turns to gold!"

He admits now that Voltaire's mind is international, his own centered on Prussia. "My principal occupation is to combat ignorance in the country which, owing to the chance of birth, I govern; to enlighten minds, to cultivate morals, and to make men as happy as human nature allows and the methods I employ will permit."

True, how true! thinks Voltaire. In this confession, which might have been made years earlier, lies the whole secret of their past antagonism. Frederick has always thought only of the welfare of Prussia. He has always been first patriot, then philosopher.

The King thinks that the golden age of French letters has passed. Only Voltaire remains, his genius undimmed. "You must have drunk of the fountain of eternal youth, or have found some secret unknown to the great men who preceded you. Your tomb will be that of good taste and good letters. Live then, as long as you can, and like another Atlas sustain on your bowed shoulders the honor of letters and of the human mind!"

Never have the King's letters been filled with such unqualified admiration as now when he fears that every tomorrow may bring the news of Voltaire's death.

"How many centuries," he cries, "will elapse before there rises up a genius who adds so much knowledge to so much taste!" And on hearing that Voltaire has had a stroke of apo-

plexy, Frederick writes, "The accident which has happened to you saddens all those who hear of it."

Never has Frederick paid such homage to Voltaire's wit. Unique indeed in his correspondence are these long rollicking letters which continue to come from the Old Invalid of Ferney who will not die. "No, there was never a more amusing old man than you are!" says the King, shaking his head.

Letters in which the dancing pen passes in a flash from the slow rhythm of gravity to the whirl of mirth. Frederick is busy reconstructing Prussia after the wars—Voltaire is busy building up Ferney. Frederick has given shelter in Prussia to a large number of the Jesuits expelled from France and Spain—Voltaire plays chess with Father Adam. What Frederick the King has been able to do on a large scale, Voltaire the citizen has done on a smaller one. So to Frederick Voltaire writes—

"I bless you in my village because you have built so many; I bless you on the edge of my marsh because you have drained so much; I bless you with my workmen because you have delivered so many from slavery and have changed them into men. Gengis-Khan and Tamburlain won battles like you, they conquered more territory than you; but they devastated and you ameliorate. I do not know whether they would have sheltered Jesuits; but I am sure you will make them useful without allowing them to be dangerous. They say that Anthony journeyed from Brundisium to Rome in a chariot drawn by lions. You harness foxes to yours, but you put a bit in their mouth. And, if it were necessary, you would put fire to their backsides like Samson, after having tied their tails together."

Woe to philosophers who cannot laugh away their learned wrinkles! I look on solemnity as a disease! It seems to me that morality, study, and gaiety are three sisters who should never be separated. Was it really forty years ago, Frederick asks himself, that Voltaire wrote him this? Yes, for he remembers well how great an impression these lines made on him at the time—and he was still Prince Royal then. And after all these years the old man of eighty still retains his gaiety! The long patient

war for human rights has not changed it to pessimism! Suddenly the King senses the true greatness of Voltaire. For what a war it has been—one against all! What bitter moments there must have been! Frederick remembers that time in the Seven Years War when faced by similar odds he himself had meditated suicide. To the Patriarch of Ferney he writes—

"Yes, yes—you have surpassed all your predecessors in the noble heroism with which you have combated error!"

In Germany at this time there is another man, many years younger than the King of Prussia, who sits spellbound watching that great sun sinking towards the horizon. How to describe it! He writes—

"Depth, genius, imagination, taste, reason, sensibility, philosophy, elevation, originality, nature, intellect, fancy, rectitude, facility, flexibility, precision, art, abundance, variety, fertility, warmth, magic, charm, grace, force, an eagle's sweep of vision, vast understanding, rich instruction, excellent tone, urbanity, vivacity, delicacy, correctness, purity, cleanness, elegance, harmony, brilliancy, rapidity, gayety, pathos, sublimity, universality, perfection, indeed—behold Voltaire!"

The man who writes this is not an Abbé who needs money. It is the twenty year old Goethe.

XII

"You are the only person in France nowadays who lives like a grand seigneur," writes to Voltaire one of his distinguished friends.

The prosperity of the Lord of Ferney is real, not fictitious. Unlike the dukes and princes who pay him annuities Voltaire keeps his annual expenditures well within his income. He has sold Les Délices but has bought another large property at Tournay. His Ferney estate takes in miles of country.

Through Louis XV's reign conditions in France have been steadily growing worse. While the Seven Years War raged in

VOLTAIRE

(from the statue by Houdon in the Comédie Française)

Europe the English and French had been struggling in the East and West for colonial and commercial supremacy. When Louis XVI came to the throne both India and Canada had passed into the hands of the English.

The Well-Beloved dies in the year when Voltaire is eighty. Louis XV has seen the social structure of France begin to crack, but without worrying. "It will last my time," he says, shrugging his shoulders, indifferently; adding, however, that he pities his successor.

The new king is Louis XV's grandson, for the Dauphin has died. Louis XVI, a young man of twenty, means well. The few brains he has himself are fully occupied with his hobby of making locks and keys. He yields to advice, and lets a capable minister govern.

Voltaire is overjoyed when he hears that Turgot has been appointed Minister of Finance. For Turgot is one of the brethren, he has visited Voltaire at Ferney, and is a friend of the people.

"We are losing taste, but we are acquiring thought," writes Voltaire to Frederick. "There is especially a M. Turgot, who would be worthy to converse with your Majesty. This is the beginning of a great revolution."

Of a greater revolution than Voltaire thinks. For Turgot lasts just two years. Then he is dismissed, as too much of a reformer.

The odds against the new Minister for Finance had been too great. The wars, the century-long mismanagement of France by stupid kings, bigoted confessors, and extravagant mistresses, had accumulated a national debt of a billion and a half dollars. Louis XV had not only squeezed France dry of money, but had also spent the taxes for several years following his death.

The moment Turgot began fighting this royal system of selling the privilege of collecting the taxes to big capitalists, who in turn portioned them out among lesser capitalists, a system which encouraged the worst forms of extortion and graft —this moment he was ruined. Marie Antoinette, the new

Queen, took no interest in reform that spelled economy. The hierarchy of leeches clinging to the body of the people could not be detached by any single hand.

But while Turgot was in power he managed to relieve Gex, the section of Burgundy in which Voltaire was located, of a number of unjust taxes which Voltaire in his writings on social conditions in France had frequently emphasized. It was now rumored through Europe that Voltaire was to be made marquis of this piece of country. The Patriarch of Ferney promptly contradicts this report.

"Marquis Voltaire," he announces, "would be good for nothing but to show at the fair with the monkeys."

The dismissal of Turgot came as a great blow to Voltaire. "Ah, *mon Dieu!*" he exclaims, "what fatal news I hear! What will become of us?"

During the past few years Voltaire had been exposing the dreadful financial condition of France in a series of burlesque romances, the most famous of which was *The Man with Forty Crowns,* who became as familiar a character to the French people as Franklin's Poor Richard to the people of America. In these burlesques he tried to stir up public opinion against the farmers-general whose extortions were ruining the peasants and against the Church, that huge parasite which did no work but owned so large a part of France.

The Man with Forty Crowns cannot understand why the rich abbey near his home should appropriate such a generous portion of his small capital. As Voltaire's mouthpiece he asks a number of simple questions to enlighten himself upon why the monks live in comfort while he has to struggle so hard for a living. Finally, when he realizes that their sole duty in life is to pray to God in order to save the souls of such poor people as himself, he puts forward an ingenious suggestion. "Very well, I will pray to God for them. *Let us share!*"

Voltaire creates a fictional Turgot who horrified by the graft and privilege he sees on every side of him exclaims, "We shall

have to make these sacred and profane leeches disgorge! It is time to relieve the people, who, without our care and our justice, would never have anything to live upon, except in the next world."

These burlesque tales, which included The Princess of Babylon, The Atheist and the Sage, The Letters of Amabed, and The White Bull, all aim to show that Ignorance and Superstition are twin sisters, that there can be no real progress until Reason replaces Faith. "The thinking portion of the human race; that is, *the hundred thousandth part* of the human race," Voltaire begins one of his stories. In *The White Bull* he puts on exhibition a menagerie of the preposterous animals famous in Biblical history. The bull is Nebuchadnezzar, his companions are Balaam's ass, the whale that swallowed Jonah, the serpent that tempted Eve, the dove of the Ark, and the Witch of Endor. These phenomena, for centuries accustomed to be made the subject of grave sermons, exchange glances of dismay when Voltaire steps into their midst, cracks his whip, and makes them dance.

But during these last years of his life the Patriarch of Ferney, as he contemplates social conditions in France, worries a great deal over something which touches him personally. What will become of his colony after his death?

He knows well that as soon as he is dead the priests and the farmers-general alike will fall upon this child of his. His only hope lies in interesting the French government in Ferney. When Turgot comes into power Voltaire immediately draws up a petition to this effect and sends copies of it to all the ministers.

"I am exceedingly anxious," he writes to the Marquis de Condorcet, "that this petition should be presented to the Chamber of Commerce, where M. Turgot may have the casting vote. I have at least the consolation that in spite of all the opposition I have met with Ferney has become, since you saw it, a pretty considerable place, which is not unworthy the attention of the ministry. It contains not only fairly large and lofty stone

houses for the manufacturers, but pretty little country seats which would be an ornament to Saint-Cloud or Meudon. It will all relapse into the nothingness whence I drew it, if the ministry abandons us. I am perhaps the only founder of a manufactory who has never asked the government for money. Now, I only ask it to attend to its own interests.'

Nothing comes of this petition. Turgot's energies are entirely absorbed trying to hold back the tide of national bankruptcy—he cannot help his friend. Voltaire returns again and again to the attack. Dread of what will happen to these twelve hundred inhabitants of his little city, who rely on him implicitly, weighs heavily on his mind. To the Councillor of State, Farges, he writes a long letter describing the abject poverty of the country surrounding his colony, finishing with a quaint plea for government protection for the one oasis in this desert—Ferney—

"An old man, who took it into his head to settle between Switzerland and Geneva, has established a watch manufactory in the province of Gex which pays the workmen of the country exceedingly well, which increases the population, and which, if protected by the Government, will supersede the business of wealthy Geneva: but this old man is not much longer for this world."

In vain. Louis XVI, the opening of whose reign had seemed to promise so much, is too truly one of those Bourbons who forget nothing and learn nothing. Over him as he tinkers with his locks, seems to hover the shadow of the Well-Beloved, saying indifferently, "It will last my time—but I pity my grandson." And Madame de Pompadour's, answering,

"Yes—after us the deluge."

XIII

The death of Louis XV was an event that had a personal significance for Voltaire. Perhaps now he could safely visit Paris.

While the king lived he had not dared to do so. He knew

that Louis XV disliked him. He might be permitted to make his home on the very edge of France, but Paris was still forbidden him.

Friends assured him that while Louis XVI might not openly countenance his coming still he need not fear persecution in the capital. His long exile had increased his popularity with the public. His plays were constantly being revived. Besides he now had a prodigious reputation as defender of the oppressed. Come, they said, and you will receive a great welcome.

Still Voltaire hesitated. What of the enemies he had made through his war on the Infamous? Threatening letters still arrived frequently at Ferney. He dreaded the knife of a fanatic assassin.

But in the winter of 1775–76 Voltaire had adopted a girl of eighteen, the daughter of a penniless army officer living in his neighborhood. First this girl, one of a large family, had come to Ferney to be a companion to Madame Denis. Because she was both good and beautiful, Voltaire had given her the name of Belle-et-Bonne. She was as popular with Madame Denis as she was with the master of the house. Her father, unable to support her, planned to put her in a convent. Voltaire's offer to solve the problem of her future more happily by making her his legal daughter was gladly accepted.

There came on a visit to Ferney a middle-aged and wealthy aristocrat, the Marquis de Villette, son of a lady with whom Voltaire had long been friendly. He fell in love with Belle-et-Bonne, and in the fall of 1777 they were married at Ferney, where they spent their honeymoon.

The Marquis owned a large house in Paris. He returned here with his bride, and from now on the Patriarch of Ferney was pressed to visit them here.

Voltaire still hesitates. "There are in Paris," he declares, "forty thousand fanatics who, while blessing Heaven, would carry forty thousand fagots to make a fire to burn me. That would be *my* bed of honor."

To this he is given answer—"But in Paris you have eighty

thousand friends who, all running to put out the fire, would, if it would amuse you, drown the fagot carriers."

Madame Denis is tired of Ferney. She joins her entreaties to those of the married couple. Voltaire begins to waver.

All his friends in the capital now urge him to come. Does he not wish to see once again before he dies the city of his birth? Besides, the actors in his new play *Irene* are having trouble with the manager of the theatre. Unless he is in Paris to superintend the rehearsals personally the play may be a failure.

This argument wins Voltaire over. He has never lost his love for the stage. Irene may be his last play. He cannot bear the thought of its failing.

But he is eighty-three. Will he be able to stand the seven days' jolting over bad roads, the excitement of his reception? Consternation spreads through Ferney at the news that he is going. Wagnière, his new secretary, notes that on the 3rd of February when they make their departure "all the colonists were weeping, and seemed to foresee misfortune. Voltaire himself was moved to tears. He promised them that in a month and a half, without fail, he would return to the midst of his children."

Voltaire is so confident he will soon return that he puts none of his papers in order. From the carriage window, through tear-dimmed eyes, he looks back at the little city he has created, at the crowd looking after the carriage, until it dwindles and vanishes from view. . . . Six weeks—only six weeks! . . .

PART FIVE: *Paris: 1778*

I

"THE appearance of a phantom, of a ghost, of a prophet, or of an apostle could not have excited more surprise or admiration!" Thus comments Baron Grimm in his diary on Voltaire's arrival in Paris.

Twenty-eight years an exile! A generation has grown to manhood since Voltaire was last seen in the capital. To thousands of people his great age, the distance of Ferney from Paris, have made him almost a legendary figure.

And now he is here—the old man is actually to be seen in the flesh! The news creates in Paris an unparalleled excitement. Visitors swarm to the house of the Marquis where Voltaire is staying.

Three hundred people are received by him the first day. Each comes expecting some witty word to treasure after his death, and no one goes away disappointed.

Turgot, limping with gout, is in the line. Of all men in France he is the man Voltaire most honors. He embraces him, then looks at his bandaged feet. "When I look at M. Turgot, I think I see the statue of Nebuchadnezzar."—"Yes," replies Turgot, smiling, "the feet of clay."—"And the head of gold!"

Franklin comes. He has just brought to a successful close his negotiations with the French government for an alliance between France and the United States in the war for American independence.

Voltaire talks English to him. The crowd, unable to understand the conversation, murmurs. Madame Denis asks them to speak in French.

"I beg your pardon," apologizes Voltaire. "I have for a mo-

ment yielded to the vanity of showing that I can speak in the language of Franklin."

They discuss the American constitution. Voltaire is enthusiastic over the future of the new republic in the far west. "If I were only forty years old," he exclaims, "I would immediately go and settle in your happy country!"

With Franklin is his grandson, a youth of seventeen. The American philosopher asks for him the blessing of the old French philosopher. This is a solemn moment for the spectators.

Voltaire holds his thin hands over the youth's head and says slowly, "My child, God and Liberty, remember those two words!"

Shortly after Franklin has gone, the English ambassador, on the point of leaving France now that the two countries are at war, calls upon the Patriarch. Voltaire tactfully mentions the great debt he is under to England, which had given him an exile when he was a young man, and the tolerance of whose institutions had made such an impression on his mind.

For two weeks the crowd keeps coming. What does Versailles think of the fuss being made over Voltaire?

Louis XVI is not pleased. The king stops making locks long enough to inquire sullenly, "Has the order forbidding M. de Voltaire's return to Paris been annulled?"

Two weeks of this excitement, and then Voltaire begins spitting blood.

The hemorrhage lasts twenty-two days. At first violent, it gradually diminishes, but leaves him very weak.

He is too ill to attend the first performance of *Irene,* March 16th. The French Academy sends a deputation to congratulate him upon the play's success. His strength comes back. On March 30th, it is reported, Voltaire will be present in person at the theatre.

The Sunday before this date Voltaire leaves the house for

the first time since his illness to return the calls of the great ladies who have been to see him.

Fashions have changed greatly since Voltaire was last in Paris. His huge wig makes him conspicuous as he is driven through the streets. On top of this great nest of hair is balanced a square red cap. His face is quite hidden by the cascade of powdered curls, but from their depths, his eyes "shining like carbuncles," are to be seen peering out. He wears a red coat lined with ermine sent him by the Empress of Russia. His legs advertise Ferney stockings. In his hand he holds a little cane with a head of crow's beak.

In the drawing rooms the conversation for the most part centers around Voltaire's lighter writings. But now and again his war against *l'Infâme* is discussed. The old man is secretly shocked at the assumption on the part of many of the liberal aristocrats that there is no longer any need to fear the Church. One lady even reproaches him for continuing to attack it. "Be moderate and generous," she says, "after the *victory*. The fanatics are prostrate. They can no longer injure. Their reign is past."—"You are in error, madame," replies Voltaire. "It is a fire that is covered, not extinguished. Those fanatics, those impostors, are mad dogs. They are muzzled, but they have not lost their teeth. It is true they bite no more; but on the first opportunity, if their teeth are not drawn, you will see if they will not bite."

March 30th, he leaves the house at four o'clock in the afternoon to go first to attend a session of the Academy, then to the theatre.

Crowds line the streets to see him pass. Everywhere peddlers cry his name to help sell their wares. On one corner stands a man selling a book of card-tricks. "Now gentlemen," he shouts, "here is a trick which I learned at Ferney from that great man who is making so much noise here, that famous Voltaire, our master in all things!"

The coachman has difficulty making headway through the mob. Another crowd is gathered around the Louvre where

the Academy holds its sessions. And what a sight greets the old man's eyes as he mounts the steps! The whole immortal Forty (with the exception of those members who belong to the clergy, none of whom are present) are gathered in the outer hall awaiting his arrival, an honor never previously shown any member, nor even the foreign princes who have been guests of the Academy.

Voltaire is escorted to the president's chair and unanimously elected president of the Academy for the next three months.

From the Academy he is driven to the Théâtre-Français. Outside are the carriages of the Villettes and friends, waiting to meet him, and again an enormous crowd. As soon as the carriage stops people are on the wheels and the box, staring and shouting. One burly admirer forces a way to the carriage, begs for permission to kiss the Patriarch's hand, kisses instead by mistake in the confusion the hand of Belle-et-Bonne, and exclaims in a sonorous voice, "By my faith, that is a very plump hand for a man of eighty-four!"

Voltaire enters the theatre between two lines of hands which snatch at his fur cloak—another present from the Empress—to pluck out hairs for souvenirs.

In the box reserved for him his niece and his adopted daughter are already seated. The old man tries to hide behind them.

"To the front! To the front!" shouts the audience.

Now another cry is raised. "The crown! The crown!"

One of the actors enters the box and places a laurel crown on Voltaire's head. "Ah, Dieu!" exclaims Voltaire, "you wish then to make me die of glory!" He says this with feeling, for under the excitement of the day he is already beginning to grow faint.

He takes the crown from his head and puts it on Belle-et-Bonne's. The audience shakes angry fists at her. "Put it back! Put it back!"

The Prince de Beauvau takes the crown from her and replaces it on the old man's head.

The theatre is now in an uproar. Baron Grimm notices a

number of unseemly fist-fights starting over disputed positions. In some places gentlemen are crawling on their hands and knees under the seats to better their points of view. The building seems to rock with the noise. The dust raised is so thick that it becomes difficult for anybody to see. All of which is not very good for the health of the old man wearing the laurel crown.

The tumult is renewed at the end of the play. The curtain rises again. Upon the stage are to be seen the actors, grouped around a bust of Voltaire, and each holding a garland of flowers and palm. More noise of trumpets and drums and salvos of applause as the actors, one by one, put their garlands on the bust.

The leading actress now comes forward and recites the following lines—

"In the sight of enchanted Paris, receive today an homage which severe posterity will confirm from age to age. No, you have no need to reach the dark shore in order to enjoy the honor of immortality. Voltaire, receive the crown just presented to you. It is beautiful to merit it when it is France that gives it."

More shouting. More trumpets and drums. More fist-fights to obtain positions from which the hero can be seen leaving the theatre, more crawling of elegant gentlemen under seats. More dust. Voltaire emerges from this ordeal badly shaken up.

He knows his fickle countrymen, and all this hubbub does not impress him as much as the crowd thinks. He says in private to his secretary—

"Ah, my friend, you do not know the French. They did as much for the Genevan Jean-Jacques. Several persons even gave a crown to some porters for the privilege of mounting on their shoulders to see him pass. Afterwards an order was issued for his arrest, and he was obliged to fly."

II

At Versailles, what?

The Queen would like to see Voltaire, but the royal locksmith is still sullen. Hearing the philosopher's name mentioned

in her boudoir, Louis XV again grumbles stupidly, "Ah, ah, M. de Voltaire! He is in Paris! That is true, but it is without my permission."

Some one who has heard that search has been made for the order exiling Voltaire, and that it has not been found, is bold enough to say, "But, Sire, he was never exiled."—"That may be," mutters the worthy Bourbon, "but I know what I am saying."

Most of the courtiers are aware of the absurdity of the situation. Here all Paris is flocking to see Voltaire, yet the Court ignores his presence. Many of the courtiers, against the wishes of the King, have slipped in to call on the old man. The Queen had wanted to go to the theatre the night when Voltaire appeared there in person. She had wished him to have the box next to hers so that she could talk to him during the play. The King would not hear of this.

Shall Voltaire be allowed to come to Versailles? Madame Campan, the Queen's first lady-in-waiting, tells the answer to this question—

"There was a grave inconvenience in allowing Paris to pronounce with such transports an opinion so contrary to that of the Court. This was hinted to the Queen, and it was suggested to her that she ought at least, without according Voltaire the honor of a presentation, to admit him to her drawing-room. She was not very far from following this advice, and appeared embarrassed only as to what she should say to him in case she consented to see him. She was advised to speak to him only of the *Henriade, Merope* and *Zaire*. The Queen said to those who had taken the liberty to make these observations to her that she should further consult persons in whom she had great confidence. The next day she said it was irrevocably decided that Voltaire should see no member of the royal family, his writings being full of principles that made a too direct attack on religion and morals."

The Court preachers are working overtime these days. The Abbé de Beauregard, justly famous for his antics in the pulpit, rises to heights of buffoonery he has never reached before

in the course of a long life-time of preaching. The King trembles at the vivid word-pictures of Hell drawn by the Abbé. Louis wishes mightily that Voltaire were out of town so that he could put his whole mind on lock-making again.

Never, never, swears the Abbé, if Voltaire should die in Paris (as the Abbé hopes he will) shall his corpse contaminate by its presence those of decent people. The sewers are too good for the body of this Antichrist, but there, where they are dirtiest, it shall be thrown.

Voltaire smiles at these threats. He says mockingly,—

"The Abbé de Beauregard would gladly refuse to bury me, which is very unjust. For it is said that I would ask nothing better than to bury *him*, and I think he owes me the same politeness."

Two months have passed since he left Ferney.

Now that he is in Paris his niece is determined to keep him here. Madame Denis has no intention of burying herself in the provinces again. She wants to get married, and to live in Paris.

Dr. Tronchin warns Voltaire against staying. He had miraculously escaped dying from his hemorrhage but another seizure will undoubtedly prove fatal.

"You have too much intelligence," says the doctor, "not to realize that a tree eighty-four years old is not transplanted unless it is desired to kill it. Start in eight days—I have an excellent traveling-carriage in readiness at your service."

Voltaire writes to Ferney that he is to be expected at Easter.

But when Easter comes he is still in Paris. The party, headed by Madame Denis, which wants him to stay, has triumphed over the doctor. They have put forward the argument that if Voltaire goes the Court will never allow him to return. Voltaire feels there is truth in this. In Paris as well as Versailles the preachers are now thundering against the philosophers in their pulpits. The thought that once on the road to Ferney he will have seen Paris for the last time makes it difficult for him to tear himself away from the capital.

Besides he feels well again. He is working on a new tragedy, *Agathocle*. He is attending to his duties as president of the Academy. Again he receives visitors.

John Adams, newly arrived diplomatic representative of the United States, sees him at a performance of *Alzire*, revived in honor of Voltaire's presence in Paris. The future second president of the United States sits in the box next to Voltaire's. "Between acts," Adams writes to America, "the audience called out Voltaire! and clapped and applauded him the whole time. The old poet arose and bowed respectfully to the audience. He has yet much fire in his eyes and vigor in his countenance, although very old."

Voltaire feels so strong that a few days later he goes on foot to attend a session of the Academy of Sciences. He is not a member, but has been invited as Franklin, an honorary member, is to be present.

A crowd accompanies him, besieging him with expressions of admiration, questions, petitions. The proprietress of a bookstall pushes her way to his side, munching a piece of bread. "My good M. de Voltaire, write some books for me, and my fortune will be made immediately. You have done it for so many other people. Oh, my good sir, please write me some books! I am a poor woman."

At the hall of the Academy of Sciences there is more excitement. Voltaire and Franklin must exhibit themselves together to the members. They bow, speak to one another. The scientists, warming up, demand a greater display of affection. They shake hands. This, also, is too formal. "Embrace in the French manner!" They kiss each other on both cheeks, and at last the audience is satisfied.

One Voltaire, the old courtier accustomed to flatter and liking to be flattered himself, receives all this adulation smilingly, but the other Voltaire, the solitary worker who lies in bed with his thoughts, wearies of it. "Today, monsieur," says a minor poet who visits him, "I have come to see Homer. I shall call another day to see Euripides and Sophocles. Afterwards,

Tacitus. Then, Lucian. Then—" Voltaire holds up his hand. "Monsieur, I am very old. Could you not pay all these visits today?"

Compliments—compliments—but always before him the stern accusing face of Dr. Tronchin. And always before him also that background of terrible poverty which he knows to be the real Paris. "Here there is everywhere revolting luxury and frightful misery," he writes. "Paris is the headquarters of all the follies, blunders and horrors conceivable. When shall I see Ferney again?"

Yet there are moments when the tired old man is genuinely glad to be in Paris. Moments when Voltaire is no longer oppressed by a sense of the emptiness of glory, when he feels that he the great mocker has not lived in vain.

These moments come on the streets when through the babel of tongues, some asking whom the crowd is following, others answering that it is Voltaire the great poet, Voltaire the great philosopher, Voltaire the friend of the King of Prussia and the Empress of Russia, he hears a voice cry out—

"It is he who saved the families of Calas and Sirven!"

III

"I must start in fifteen days, without which all perishes at Ferney!"

It is the cry of despair of a sick man killing himself with worry and excitement.

Does Voltaire know he will never see Ferney again? Ah, in his heart he must know it, though he tries to deceive himself by constantly setting new dates for his departure!

Paris holds Madame Denis like a magnet, and she, in turn, has a firm grip on her uncle. Even while Voltaire insists he will go, he feels he will stay.

He has sent to Ferney for his large traveling-carriage, equipped so that he can work and sleep on the road. When he tells the doctor that he is afraid the carriage offered him is not

comfortable enough he sees by Tronchin's expression that the doctor understands well Voltaire has only sent for his own carriage to delay the time of leaving. But the old man is nervous, unstrung by the constant urgings of his niece that he stay in Paris. He becomes hysterical, bursts into tears frequently. He has not the strength to oppose Madame Denis.

She tells him that his colonists, now that most of them are well-off and own their own houses, do not want him to return. That they are tired of his being the dictator of Ferney, and would rather manage their affairs themselves.

The coach arrives. The coachman brings from Ferney with him a dog that Voltaire is very fond of. It runs to his bed and jumps up barking joyously. Again he bursts into tears. "You see," he says, "that I am still loved at Ferney." But Voltaire has aged ten years since his hemorrhage, and there is only a shadow of defiance in his voice. The dog is kept out of the house after this.

Madame Denis insists he is too weak to make the journey, also that there is no need for it. His secretary, Wagnière, is well acquainted with his affairs, and can go instead.

"I know that Wagnière is an honest man," replies Voltaire, "but it is absolutely necessary that I should return."

Return! Return! How Madame Denis hates the word. But she can afford to be patient. Active and strong, it would be strange indeed if she could not wear down this old invalid's obstinacy. She asks,

"Why, uncle?"

Why! Why! It is this word which in Voltaire's ears has become terrible. Under its merciless hammering he feels he is going insane.

"Because I love the country," he cries. "Because it keeps me alive. You stay here and amuse yourself—you who hate the country—but let me go."

His niece gives him a sharp look. "Who told you that I hate the country, uncle?"

"My experience," answers the old man, and will say no more.

But Madame Denis is fond of her uncle. She remembers that she owes everything to him. She realizes, also, that it would not look well if she let him go back to Ferney alone. At the same time she foresees a day in the near future when Voltaire will be unable to take any active part in the management of the colony. She knows he hopes to live to be a hundred, like the poet Fontenelle, and to remain intellectually active. But who can tell? At any moment he may become a hopeless invalid. In that case why not be in Paris? As Voltaire has guessed she has never liked the country. The manufacture of watches and farming, do not interest her. But Paris—Paris interests her a great deal.

She suggests a compromise. Why not buy a house in Paris, so that they can live here during the winter, while their summers will be spent at Ferney? She takes her uncle to see one that is being built in the Rue de Richelieu. At five o'clock in the afternoon of April 29th Voltaire is sitting in a notary's with her signing the contract.

He leaves his niece talking to the notary and goes home alone.

"Ah, my friend," he exclaims despairingly to his secretary, about to leave for Ferney, "I have just bought a house, and I have acquired only my tomb!"

He pulls himself together. Something tells him that if he gives way to despair all is lost. For him to stay alive his mind must be active. Work, work—this is what has held back death all these years. In work he will again forget his troubles.

For a long time Voltaire has felt that the French language needs a new dictionary badly. Now that he is president of the Academy his chance seems to have come to project one.

At a meeting of the Academy he calls attention to the insufficiency of the dictionary then in use. A translation of one

of Pope's poems has been read by a member. Voltaire compliments the translator and points out the difficulty of translating many English authors into French due to the comparative poverty of the French language. English is constantly being enriched with new words, it is growing—French is standing still.

He wants an up-to-date dictionary which will be a credit to the Academy. He asks each of the members to take one or more letters so that work on the new dictionary can be immediately gotten under way.

The Academy hesitates. Compiling this dictionary will mean a lot of work and many of the members are unwilling to give their time.

Voltaire draws up a complete plan of the dictionary which he presents at the next meeting of the Academy on May 7th. His enthusiasm carries the day. A vote is taken, and the dictionary project approved.

But if it is to be done, it must be done now. Before the meeting breaks up the twenty-four letters must be distributed. Voltaire himself says he will take the letter A, to which there will probably be the most work attached. Someone reminds him of his age. He laughs. When all the letters have been assigned he rises from his chair and says merrily.

"Gentlemen, I thank you in the name of the alphabet!"

IV

Voltaire, at eighty-four, undertaking the world's first comprehensive national dictionary, working night and day on letter A!

A feverish energy possesses him. He knows many of the academicians have accepted their letters unwillingly. In order that the whole project may not be dropped in the event of his early death, he writes a long discourse emphasizing the importance of the dictionary to read at the next meeting.

To finish the dictionary before he dies has become an obses-

sion. Words, words, all beginning with A, how they rush into the old man's mind! Hour after hour he lies in bed writing. To stimulate himself to greater effort he drinks coffee unceasingly.

He writes his last epigram. A protégé of his named Grétry has written an opera which, first produced at Versailles, had failed here, but is now being applauded in Paris. The pen which has danced so much, and is now staggering up that long steep mountain of A's, steadies itself for a final pirouette. "The Court has reviled your songs, of which Paris says marvelous things. Alas! the ears of the great are often long ears."

On, on with the dictionary! But this time the body has mastery over the spirit. Voltaire begins to suffer so intensely that he can no longer work.

The Duke of Richelieu recommends an opium preparation which he himself has taken to relieve the pains of gout. The pains vanish, as if by enchantment. The old man writes on. Then, suddenly, he feels the effect of the opium which he has been taking in increasing doses.

A dreadful nausea sets in. His stomach rejects even the opium preparation which he continues to try to take to relieve the pains which now are more intense than ever. The room reels around him. Doctor Tronchin is sent for again.

The Genevan doctor is a man of cold temperament. He does not pity Voltaire. He is professionally angry that his advice has not been taken. He resents that weakness which had made Voltaire ashamed of sending for him earlier, which had made him take instead the medicine recommended by the Duke of Richelieu. Voltaire must die now, and it will be his own fault. There is no sympathy in the glance Doctor Tronchin gives the sufferer when he arrives, only accusation. Cold, logical, efficient, by nature akin to the stern pastors of his home-town, he will write in the following tone to Geneva when Voltaire is no more.

"I always spoke the truth to him, and, unfortunately for him, I was the only one who never deceived him. 'Yes, my friend,' he often said to me, 'you alone have given me good

advice. If I had followed it I should not be in the frightful condition in which I am; I should have returned to Ferney; I should not have inhaled the intoxicating fumes that turned my head. Yes, I swallowed nothing but smoke. You can be of no more use to me; send me the madmen's doctor. By what fatality did I come to Paris? You told me when I arrived that an oak eighty-four years old could not be transplanted, and you spoke the truth. Why did I not believe you? And when I gave you my word of honor that I would set out in the carriage which you procured for me, why did I not go? Have pity on me; I am mad.' He had intended to leave the next day but one after the follies of his coronation at the theatre; but he received a deputation from the French Academy, who entreated him, before he left Paris, to honor the Academy with his presence. From that moment his days were only a whirlwind of follies. He was ashamed of them. When he saw me he asked my pardon; he clasped my hands; he prayed me to pity him, and not abandon him, especially because he had to make new efforts in order to respond to the honor which the Academy had done him in engaging him to work upon a new dictionary. The making of this dictionary was his last dominant idea, his last passion. He had taken upon himself the letter A, and had distributed the twenty-three others among twenty-three Academicians; several of whom, by accepting unwillingly, had singularly irritated him. 'They are sluggards,' he would say, 'accustomed to wallow in idleness; but I will make them march!' And it was in the effort to make them march, during the interval between the two sessions, that he took at haphazard so many drugs, and committed all the follies that hastened his death and threw him into the most frightful state of despair and madness."

There is little the doctor can do. One look at his patient and he knows the end is near. Voltaire's indomitable will is at last broken. The fire has gone from his eyes. With difficulty Tronchin induces him to swallow spoonfuls of jelly and blancmange. Day by day he grows weaker.

Bulletins on his condition are posted daily at the Academy. The special session at which he had planned to read his discourse on the dictionary is postponed. Can it be that this time Voltaire is really dying? He has outlived so many stronger men, he has talked of death for so long, that his friends cannot believe it. But at last there is no longer room for doubt.

"The effect of the opium has passed," Wagnière is informed in a letter urging his instant return from Ferney, "but it has left cruel symptoms. The debility is extreme; he has a fearful repugnance to whatever could sustain or restore him; he will not even take broth. So his feebleness increases." And the following day, May 26th, "The impossibility of making him take nourishment still continues. It would be to deceive ourselves to hope any more . . ."

And now, when the news gets around that Voltaire's illness will certainly prove fatal, another class of visitors crowds to the bedchamber of the dying man . . . The priests. . . .

V

Three months before, on that morning when as Voltaire lay in bed dictating to his secretary, Wagnière had suddenly heard his old master give three violent coughs, and looking up had seen blood pouring from his nose and mouth "with the same violence as when the faucet is turned of a fountain upon which there is pressure," a panic had seized Voltaire.

He believed he was dying. What would become of his body?

The priests had the disposal of the bodies of the dead. Would his be thrown into the sewers as they threatened?

A curious fear, it may be thought, to trouble a philosopher. But Voltaire is an intensely social being. It is his love of people that has always given his writings, upon all subjects, the warm human touch. He cannot bear the thought of being an exile even after death.

He is an old man, and he has human frailty. But the priests

who then, as during his final illness, flocked to his room, each wanting to snatch from the other the triumph of converting Voltaire, disgusted him by their fanaticism. There is one, however, who seems honest and sincere.

Voltaire talks to his friend D'Alembert, the perpetual secretary of the Academy. If he dies in the Catholic religion, will he seem to be going back on his principles? D'Alembert thinks not. In his writings lies his true expression of faith. D'Alembert indeed advises him to make peace with the Church before he dies.

Posterity will know that with Voltaire it was only a matter of form to gain his end of a decent burial. Besides, a death scandal might do great harm to the philosophers.

Voltaire takes his advice, and sends for the Abbé Gaultier, to the grave disapproval of his protestant secretary, Wagnière. D'Alembert writes a letter to the King of Prussia so that Frederick may have the truthful details of the affair—

"Finding himself worse than usual on one of the days of his sickness, he bravely took the part of doing what he had agreed upon. During a visit which I paid him in the morning, as he spoke to me with considerable vehemence, and as I begged him to be silent in order not to distress his chest, he said to me, laughing, 'Talk I must, whether I wish it or not. Don't you remember that I have to confess? The moment has come, as Henry IV said, to make the perilous leap; so I have sent for the Abbé Gaultier, and I am waiting for him.' This Abbé Gaultier, Sire, is a poor devil of a priest, who, of his own notion and from mere good-will, introduced himself to M. de Voltaire some days before his sickness, and offered him, in case of need, his ecclesiastical services. M. de Voltaire accepted them, because this man appeared to him more moderate and reasonable than three or four other wretched priests, who, without being sent for, and without any more knowing Voltaire than the Abbé Gaultier, had come to his room to preach to him like fanatics, to announce to him hell and the judgments of God, and whom the old patriarch, from goodness of heart, had not

ordered to be thrown out of the window. This Abbé Gaultier arrived, then, was shut up an hour with the sick man, and came out so well satisfied that he wished to go at once to get at the parish church what we call the *Bon Dieu*. This the sick man did not wish, 'for the reason,' said he, 'that I am spitting blood, and I might by ill-chance spit out something else.' He gave to this Abbé Gaultier, who asked him for it, a profession of faith, written entirely in his own hand, and by which he declared that he wished to die in the Catholic religion, in which he was born, hoping from the divine mercy that God would deign to pardon all his faults; and added that, if he had ever scandalized the Church, he asked pardon from God and from it. He added this last article at the requisition of the priest, *'and,'* said he, *'to have peace.'* He gave this profession of faith to the Abbé Gaultier in the presence of his family and of those of his friends who were in his chamber; two of whom signed as witnesses at the bottom of the profession."

This profession of faith, dragged line by line by the priest out of the Voltaire who thought himself dying, read—

"I, the undersigned, declare that, having been attacked four days ago by a vomiting of blood, at the age of eighty-four years, and being unable to get to church, the curé of Saint-Sulpice having been willing to add to his good works that of sending me the Abbé Gaultier, priest, I have confessed to him; and declare further that, if God disposes of me, I die in the Catholic religion, in which I was born, hoping from the divine mercy that He will deign to pardon all my faults, and that if I have ever scandalized the Church I ask pardon of God and of it. Signed, VOLTAIRE, March 2, 1778, in the house of the Marquis de Villette, in the presence of the Abbé Mignot, my nephew, and of the Marquis de Villevielle, my friend."

The priest, with this much conceded to him, now wanted to give Voltaire the communion. The sick man put him off, however, with the remark, "M. Abbé, observe that I continually spit blood; I must beware of mingling that of the good God with mine."

Voltaire, as the hemorrhage diminished, treated his profession of faith lightly. He found, as he had hoped, that his motives for making it were well understood. "They will not throw me into the sewers now," he said, "for I have confessed to the Abbé Gaultier." To counteract the version of the affair being broadcast by the priests he gave ample evidence in his conversations that he had not grown devout.

"It is necessary," he declared slyly, "for a man to die in the religion of his fathers. If I lived upon the banks of the Ganges, I should wish to die with a cow's tail in my hand."

The priests come again now, flocking like buzzards scenting death to the sick-room.

They eye one another furtively, jealously. Here lies the prize —which one of them will get it. For it has been generally agreed that Voltaire's profession of faith made to the Abbé Gaultier is not enough. Has he not been all his life the most notorious enemy of religion? To be buried decently, Voltaire must make an abject apology which can be broadcast by the Church throughout the kingdom.

The curé of Saint-Sulpice, the parish priest, is indignant. He had by no means intended, as Voltaire credited him in the profession of faith, to add to his good works by sending the Abbé Gaultier to prepare the old man's soul for the next world. He looks on the Abbé Gaultier as an interloper, a free-lance who is trying to capture for himself an honor that belongs rightfully to the parish priest.

It is true that when the dying person is some one of no consequence the curé often deputes another priest to perform the final ceremonies. But Voltaire's case is a far different matter. The curé is vexed that the Abbé Gaultier should have stolen a march on him by obtaining that profession of faith. He is so vexed that he cannot make too little of this document. The document of real importance, he insists, is the retraction which he himself has drawn up for Voltaire to sign.

While the priests bicker and quarrel, Voltaire grows weaker.

He lies in a torpor much of the time. He is delirious. But for short periods he seems to have perfect possession still of all his senses.

Four days before his death news is brought him that the Council of State has cleared the memory of General Lally, beheaded fifteen years before as a traitor. It is through the tireless efforts of Voltaire that this act of justice has at last been brought about. He sits up in bed and dictates a note of congratulation to the young Count of Lally, son of the murdered general.

"The dying man revives on learning this great news. He embraces very tenderly M. de Lally. He sees that the king is the defender of justice. He will die content."

Voltaire's strength is failing fast but something of the old fighting spirit is still in him. He orders written in large letters on a piece of paper, which is then placed on the wall in such a position that everyone entering the room must see it, the following notice—

"On the 26th of May the Judicial Assassination, Committed by Pasquier (Counselor to the Parliament) upon the Person of Lally, was Avenged by the King's Council."

Three days follow during which he lies so still that it is difficult at times to tell whether he is dead or alive. May 30th, the curé of Saint-Sulpice enters with the retraction and to administer the last sacraments. With the curé is the Abbé Gaultier, who has obstinately insisted upon coming also.

Their presence is announced to Voltaire. At first the old man seems unable to understand who the visitors are. Then he says feebly, "Assure them of my respect," and turns his head away.

The curé steps to the bedside and says in a loud voice, "M. de Voltaire, your life is about to end. Do you acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ?"

Voltaire repeats the last two words twice, then raising his hand as if to push back the curé, answers, "Let me die in peace!" and closes his eyes.

The curé bites his lip. As he turns away with the unsigned retraction he remarks, "You see plainly, gentlemen, that he is not in his senses."

But in the letter which he writes to the King of Prussia describing Voltaire's last moments, D'Alembert presumes to doubt this assumption of the curé's. "At that moment" D'Alembert informs Frederick, "Voltaire had complete possession of his reason; but the persons present, as you may well believe, Sire, took no pains to contradict the curé. That pitiful parson then retired from the chamber, and in the conversation which he held with the family he was so maladroit as to betray himself, and to prove that all his conduct was an affair of vanity. He told them that they had done very ill to summon the Abbé Gaultier, who had spoiled everything; that they should have addressed themselves to him alone, the parish priest of the sick man; and that he would have arranged everything."

The following day is Sunday, but Voltaire does not live to see it. He dies shortly after eleven on Saturday night, May 30th, 1778.

Long and full is the life he has led. Reluctantly the bright spirit leaves its incongruous human habitation. Old in years, in gaiety, zest for living, above all hope, Voltaire has remained always young. For all his mockery and scepticism he dies convinced that the dark reign of Superstition is nearing its end. "You will see great days—you will make them," he has assured his philosopher-friends. And to Frederick, in his last letter, dated when he was recovering from his hemorrhage, Voltaire had written the magnificent line—

"It is true, then, Sire, that in the end men will become enlightened, and that those paid to blind them will not always be able to put out their eyes!"

Epilogue

I

VOLTAIRE'S body was buried, but buried surreptitiously. It could find no place of rest in Paris. It was placed in a carriage in a sitting position as though he were still alive, and driven out of the capital under cover of nightfall, a man riding with the body to hold it in place. By this means it escaped the vengeance of the city priests.

The Abbé Mignot, Voltaire's nephew, had ridden on ahead. He took with him the profession of faith. With this as evidence that his uncle had not failed to die in the proper manner, he persuaded the prior of the Abbey of Scellières, a hundred miles from Paris, and with which the Abbé was connected, to give the body a resting-place in the vault of the church in the nearby village of Romilli-on-the-Seine.

It was done only just in time. A few hours after the funeral the prior received the following communication from his district bishop—

"I have just learned, monsieur, that the family of M. de Voltaire, who died some days ago, have decided to transport his body to your abbey for interment. I hope very much that you have not yet proceeded to that interment, which might have disagreeable consequences for you; and if, as I trust, the burial has not yet taken place you have only to declare that you cannot proceed in it without express orders from me."

What an uproar when the burial is found to have taken place! The prior is to be thrown out of his order, and plans are made to dig up the body from beneath that humble stone which states simply, "Here lies Voltaire." Powerful friends of the dead man prevail on the Church to refrain from this insult. The hysteria of the priests calms down. But no formal notice of

Voltaire's death is allowed to appear. And a prohibition is issued forbidding further acting of his plays.

And if the priests leave the body alone they exert themselves to the utmost to besmirch the name of Voltaire. They have their own version of his death and they play it up luridly. God-fearing congregations quake at their picture of the abyss which has swallowed up the Antichrist. The pious young Mozart, at this time giving concerts in Paris, writes to his father—

"The moment the symphony was over, I went off, in my joy, to the Palais-Royal, where I took a good ice, told over my beads, as I had vowed, and went home, where I am always happiest.

"I must give you a piece of intelligence, that you perhaps already know: namely, that the ungodly arch-villain, Voltaire, has died miserably, like a dog,—just like a brute. That is his reward."

What does Frederick, in far-off Prussia, think of this treatment? The King calls a special session of the Berlin Academy, of which he has been president since the death of Maupertuis. He invites (or orders) everyone of importance in Prussia to attend. In an address that lasts more than an hour he eulogizes his dead friend, and hurls contempt at the priests who have tried to carry their persecutions beyond the grave.

"Not content with giving moral precepts," the King cries, "Voltaire preached beneficence by his example. It was he whose courageous support came to the succor of the unfortunate family of Calas; who pleaded the cause of the Sirvens, and snatched them from the barbarous hands of their judges. He would have raised from the dead the Chevalier de la Barre if he had had the gift of miracles. It is noble in a philosopher, from the bosom of his retreat, to lift his voice and the voice of mankind, of which he is the organ, and force judges to reverse iniquitous sentences. If M. de Voltaire had possessed but this single trait, he would deserve to be placed among the small number of the true benefactors of humanity. Philosophy

and religion teach in concert the ways of virtue. Tell me which is the more Christian; the magistrate who cruelly forces a family to fly their country, or the philosopher who gives it a home and protection; the judge who uses the sword of the law to assassinate a rash young man, or the sage who wishes to save his life in order to reform him; the executioner of Calas, or the savior of his stricken family. These, gentlemen, are the actions which will render the memory of M. de Voltaire forever dear to those who are endowed with a feeling heart and a susceptible mind. However precious may be the gifts of the intellect and of the imagination, the lofty flights of genius and the vast accumulations of knowledge, those qualities, though nature bestows them but rarely, never rank higher than acts of humanity and beneficence. The former we admire; the latter we bless and venerate.

"What!" shouts the King furiously, as he closes his eulogy, "in the eighteenth century, when the light of knowledge is more spread abroad than ever before, when the philosophic spirit has made so much progress, there are still to be found pontiffs more barbarous than Hercules, fitter to live with the people of Ceylon than in the midst of the French nation! Blinded by a false zeal, drunk with fanaticism, they prevent the last duties of humanity from being paid to one of the most famous men France has ever produced. The best destiny they can look for is that they and their vile artifices will remain forever buried in the darkness of oblivion, while the fame of Voltaire will increase from age to age, and transmit his name to immortality!"

Thus Frederick on his dead friend and teacher. The King goes further. When the Church persists in keeping printed copies of his speech out of France, he decides in Prussia, if nowhere else, to bring this monster to its knees. It takes him a little time to do it, but on the second anniversary of Voltaire's death there appears in the Berlin gazette the following official paragraph—

"Today, at nine in the morning, in the Catholic church of this city, with all suitable pomp, was celebrated a solemn service for the soul of Messire Marie-Arouet de Voltaire. This

service was besought by the Catholic Academicians of Berlin, and they obtained it of M. the Curé with the more facility, justice and reason by producing authentic proofs that the late M. de Voltaire made before his death a profession of orthodox faith, that he had confessed, and edified Christian souls by considerable alms and other good works."

The Empress Catharine proves by her actions that in Russia also Voltaire has left friends. She buys Voltaire's library from Madame Denis. "I will regard it," she says, "as a precious trust, which susceptible souls will never see without remembering that this great man knew how to inspire human beings with the universal benevolence which all his writings breathe, even those of pure diversion, because his own soul was profoundly affected with it." The library contains six thousand two hundred and ten volumes, and she pays for it 135,000 livres.

She gives Voltaire's secretary Wagnière a pension, and asks him to come to Petersburg to arrange the books on the shelves exactly as they had been at Ferney. In Wagnière's presence she again testifies to the debt she is under to the dead man. Bowing low to a bust of Voltaire in the library, when she enters this for the first time to look at the arrangement, the Empress turns to the secretary and says,

"Monsieur, this is the man to whom I owe all that I know and all that I am."

Ferney—what becomes of it?

Madame Denis sells it to the Marquis de Villete, who turns it over to an Englishman. In a few years, without that government aid which Voltaire had tried so hard to get for it, the colony as he had feared has dwindled to nothingness.

II

The Revolution!

Thirteen years have passed since Voltaire's death. The Bastille has fallen, the Reign of Terror has not yet commenced.

One of the revolutionaries is the Marquis de Villette. It is he who proposes that the remains of Voltaire be brought from their provincial resting place to Paris.

A triumphal procession to the capital, the coffin carried on a high car decorated with laurel, and escorted by a detachment of the new National Guard.

At Paris the mayor meets it. Voltaire's remains are taken to the ruins of the Bastille, and placed on an altar made from stones of the fortress, and bearing the inscription—

"Upon this spot, where despotism chained thee, Voltaire, received the homage of a free people!"

From the Bastille the sarcophagus is carried to the Pantheon. It rests now on a small tower forty feet high, drawn by twelve horses. On the sides of the tower are such inscriptions as, "He defended Calas, La Barre, Sirven and Montbailly—Poet, philosopher, historian, he gave a great impulse to the human mind, and prepared us to be free—He combated the atheists and the fanatics—He inspired toleration—He claimed the rights of man against serfdom and feudalism."

Behind the great car walk Belle-et-Bonne and her husband. A hundred thousand persons are in the procession, and half a million look on.

The procession's first stopping-place is the Opera House. Here the song from the first act of Voltaire's *Samson,* "People awake! Break your chains!" is sung.

The next stop is the house of the Villettes, on the Quai of the Monks, the name of which has been changed by the revolutionaries to the Quai de Voltaire. Here the car passes under a great triumphal arch. The two daughters of Calas, wearing mourning, come forward and kiss the sarcophagus.

On to the Théâtre-Français, now the Theatre of the Nation. The theatre, too, is covered with inscriptions. One reads, "He wrote *Œdipe* at seventeen." Another, "He wrote *Irene* at eighty-three." Thirty-two medallions decorate the pillars, each bearing the name of one of Voltaire's dramas. A crown and wreaths are placed on Voltaire's statue.

At ten o'clock in the evening the sarcophagus is placed in the Pantheon.

Here it remains until the return of the Bourbons after Napoleon's exile to Elba. Then priests and royalists rifle the tomb, put the bones into a sack, carry them to a piece of waste ground, and throw them into a hole with some lime.

In 1864, when the sarcophagus in the Pantheon is opened to verify rumors of what has happened, it is found to be empty.

III

Frederick the Great outlived Voltaire by eight years, dying in 1786, at the age of seventy-four. The last years of his life were spent making reforms. He left a Prussia, in size twice that of the kingdom he had inherited from his father, and powerful and prosperous.

What can be said, in closing, of this friendship, one of the most famous of all time, between Frederick and Voltaire?

Certain similarities and certain fundamental differences in character may be pointed out. Both were humane men, the life of each was marked by immense industry. Both hated superstition. Both were ahead of their times. The King had a strong sense of duty. He despised monarchs who could draw no line between business and pleasure, who squandered the resources of their countries in dissipation, and allowed mistresses to meddle in affairs of state.

But if Frederick was a benevolent despot he was still a despot. He might not believe in divine right, but he did believe in monarchy. He despised the people, the "herd" as he called them. Voltaire had a better opinion of mankind. In monarchical France Voltaire had to be cautious in what he said against this system of government, the more so as he already had one enemy, the Church, but now and again he came out boldly with his preference for the republican form. To the author of a book on government which commended monarchy, but censured despotism, Voltaire wrote the year before his death,

"I assure you that *despotic* and *monarchical* are the same thing in the hearts of all sensible people. Despot (*herus*) means *master,* and *monarch* means *sole master,* which is very much stronger. You arrive at the happy conclusion that monarchical government is the best of all—yes, provided that Marcus Aurelius is the monarch."

In a Europe frightfully mismanaged on every side Frederick achieved greatness through system and common-sense. The superior discipline of his army won more battles for him than any military genius on his part. Bitter experience taught the King that war was not the supreme art he had thought it in his younger days, that it was not indeed an art at all but an appalling confusion whose issues were in the main decided by circumstances. At the end of one of his last campaigns in the Seven Years War Frederick wrote to Voltaire the significant line, "The longer I follow this occupation the more I am convinced that chance has most to do with it."

The King was conscientious, and a plodder, but he was no genius. Had he been born a notary's son instead of heir to the throne of Prussia the world would probably never have heard of him. The Frenchman towered a giant beside him. "I who doubt of everything," Voltaire was accustomed to say, adding that doubt was not a very agreeable state of mind, but that certainty was an absurd one. But if the mocking gaze of Voltaire penetrated far deeper into imposture than did the eyes of the King, who was nevertheless soured by what he saw and in his judgments on human nature became a royal cynic, Voltaire, different from Frederick, had faith in the future. . . . *One day, all will be well—this is our hope. All is well today—this is illusion!* . . .

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APPENDIX

Victor Hugo's Oration on Voltaire

[Delivered at Paris, May 30, 1878, the one hundredth anniversary of Voltaire's death]

A HUNDRED years ago today a man died. He died immortal. He departed laden with years, laden with works, laden with the most illustrious and the most fearful of responsibilities, the responsibility of the human conscience informed and rectified. He went cursed and blessed, cursed by the past, blessed by the future; and these, gentlemen, are the two superb forms of glory. On his death-bed he had, on the one hand, the acclaim of contemporaries and of posterity; on the other, that triumph of hooting and of hate which the implacable past bestows upon those who have combated it. He was more than a man; he was an age. He had exercised a function and fulfilled a mission. He had been evidently chosen for the work which he had done, by the Supreme Will, which manifests itself as visibly in the laws of destiny as in the laws of nature.

The eighty-four years that this man lived occupy the interval that separates the monarchy at its apogee from the revolution in its dawn. When he was born, Louis XIV still reigned; when he died, Louis XVI reigned already; so that his cradle could see the last rays of the great throne, and his coffin the first gleams from the great abyss.

Before going further, let us come to an understanding, gentlemen, upon the word abyss. There are good abysses; such are the abysses in which evil is engulfed.

Gentlemen, since I have interrupted myself, allow me to complete my thought. No word imprudent or unsound will be pronounced here. We are here to perform an act of civilization. We are here to make affirmation of progress, to pay respect to philosophers

for the benefits of philosophy, to bring to the eighteenth century the testimony of the nineteenth, to honor magnanimous combatants and good servants, to felicitate the noble effort of peoples, industry, science, the valiant march in advance, the toil to cement human concord; in one word, to glorify peace, that sublime, universal desire. Peace is the virtue of civilization; war is its crime. We are here, at this grand moment, in this solemn hour, to bow religiously before the moral law, and to say to the world, which hears France, this: There is only one power, conscience, in the service of justice; and there is only one glory, genius, in the service of truth. That said, I continue:

Before the Revolution, gentlemen, the social structure was this: At the base, the people; above the people, religion represented by the clergy; by the side of religion, justice represented by the magistracy. And, at that period of human society, what was the people? It was ignorance. What was religion? It was intolerance. And what was justice? It was injustice. Am I going too far in my words? Judge.

I will confine myself to the citation of two facts, but decisive ones.

At Toulouse, October 13, 1761, there was found in a lower story of a house a young man hanged. The crowd gathered, the clergy fulminated, the magistracy investigated. It was a suicide; they made of it an assassination. In what interest? In the interest of religion. And who was accused? The father. He was a Huguenot, and he wished to hinder his son from becoming a Catholic. There was here a moral monstrosity and a material impossibility; no matter! This father had killed his son; this old man had hanged this young man. Justice travailed, and this was the result. In the month of March, 1762, a man with white hair, Jean Calas, was conducted to a public place, stripped naked, stretched on a wheel, the members bound on it, the head hanging. Three men are there upon a scaffold; a magistrate, named David, charged to superintend the punishment, a priest to hold the crucifix, and the executioner with a bar of iron in his hand. The patient, stupefied and terrible, regards not the priest, and looks at the executioner. The executioner lifts the bar of iron, and breaks one of his arms. The victim groans and swoons. The magistrate comes forward; they make the condemned inhale salts; he returns to life. Then another stroke of the bar; another groan. Calas

loses consciousness; they revive him, and the executioner begins again; and, as each limb before being broken in two places receives two blows, that makes eight punishments. After the eighth swooning the priest offers him the crucifix to kiss; Calas turns away his head, and the executioner gives him the *coup de grâce;* that is to say, crushes in his chest with the thick end of the bar of iron. So died Jean Calas.

That lasted two hours. After his death the evidence of the suicide came to light. But an assassination had been committed. By whom? By the judges.

Another fact. After the old man, the young man. Three years later, in 1765, in Abbeville, the day after a night of storm and high wind, there was found upon the pavement of a bridge an old crucifix of worm-eaten wood, which for three centuries had been fastened to the parapet. Who had thrown down this crucifix? Who committed this sacrilege? It is not known. Perhaps a passer-by. Perhaps the wind. Who is the guilty one? The bishop of Amiens launches a *monitoire.* Note what a *monitoire* was: it was an order to all the faithful, on pain of hell, to declare what they knew or believed they knew of such or such a fact; a murderous injunction, when addressed by fanaticism to ignorance. The *monitoire* of the bishop of Amiens does its work; the town gossip assumes the character of the crime charged. Justice discovers, or believes it discovers, that on the night when the crucifix was thrown down, two men, two officers, one named La Barre, the other d'Étallonde, passed over the bridge of Abbeville, that they were drunk, and that they sang a guardroom song. The tribunal was the Seneschalcy of Abbeville. The Seneschalcy of Abbeville was equivalent to the court of the Capitouls of Toulouse. It was not less just. Two orders for arrest were issued. D'Étallonde escaped, La Barre was taken. Him they delivered to judicial examination. He denied having crossed the bridge; he confessed to having sung the song. The Seneschalcy of Abbeville condemned him; he appealed to the Parliament of Paris. He was conducted to Paris; the sentence was found good and confirmed. He was conducted back to Abbeville in chains. I abridge. The monstrous hour arrives. They begin by subjecting the Chevalier de La Barre to the torture, ordinary and extraordinary, to make him reveal his accomplices. Accomplices in what? In having crossed a bridge and sung a song. During the torture one of his knees was

broken; his confessor, on hearing the bones crack, fainted away. The next day, June 5, 1766, La Barre was drawn to the great square of Abbeville, where flamed a penitential fire; the sentence was read to La Barre; then they cut off one of his hands; then they tore out his tongue with iron pincers; then, in mercy, his head was cut off and thrown into the fire. So died the Chevalier de la Barre. He was nineteen years of age.

Then, O Voltaire! thou didst utter a cry of horror, and it will be to thine eternal glory!

Then didst thou enter upon the appalling trial of the past; thou didst plead against tyrants and monsters, the cause of the human race, and thou didst gain it. Great man, blessed be thou forever.

The frightful things that I have recalled were accomplished in the midst of a polite society; its life was gay and light; people went and came; they looked neither above nor below themselves; their indifference had become carelessness; graceful poets composed pretty verses; the court was all festival; Versailles was brilliant; Paris ignored what was passing and then it was that, through religious ferocity, the judges made an old man die upon the wheel, and the priests tore out a child's tongue for a song.

In the presence of this society, frivolous and dismal, Voltaire alone, having before his eyes those united forces, the court, the nobility, capital; that unconscious power, the blind multitude; that terrible magistracy, so severe to subjects, so docile to the master, crushing and flattering, kneeling on the people before the king; that clergy, vile mixture of hypocrisy and fanaticism; Voltaire alone, I repeat it, declared war against that coalition of all the social iniquities, against that enormous and terrible world, and he accepted battle with it. And what was his weapon? That which has the lightness of the wind and the power of the thunderbolt. A pen.

With that weapon he fought; with that weapon he conquered.

Gentlemen, let us salute that memory.

Voltaire conquered; Voltaire waged the splendid kind of warfare, the war of one alone against all; that is to say, the grand warfare. The war of thought against matter, the war of reason against prejudice, the war of the just against the unjust, the war for the oppressed against the oppressor; the war of goodness, the war of kindness. He had the tenderness of a woman and the wrath of a hero. He was a great mind, and an immense heart.

He conquered the old code and the old dogma. He conquered the feudal lord, the Gothic judge, the Roman priest. He raised the populace to the dignity of people. He taught, pacificated, and civilized. He fought for Sirven and Montbailly, as for Calas and La Barre; he accepted all the menaces, all the outrages, all the persecutions, calumny, and exile. He was indefatigable and immovable. He conquered violence by a smile, despotism by sarcasm, infallibility by irony, obstinacy by perseverance, ignorance by truth.

I have just pronounced the word, *smile*. I pause at it. Smile! It is Voltaire.

Let us say it, gentlemen, pacification is the great side of the philosopher; in Voltaire the equilibrium always re-establishes itself at last. Whatever may be his just wrath, it passes, and the irritated Voltaire always gives place to the Voltaire calmed. Then in that profound eye the SMILE appears.

That smile is wisdom. That smile, I repeat, is Voltaire. That smile sometimes becomes laughter, but the philosophic sadness tempers it. Toward the strong it is mockery; toward the weak it is a caress. It disquiets the oppressor, and reassures the oppressed. Against the great, it is raillery; for the little, it is pity. Ah, let us be moved by that smile! It had in it the rays of the dawn. It illuminated the true, the just, the good, and what there is of worthy in the useful. It lighted up the interior of superstitions. Those ugly things it is salutary to see; he has shown them. Luminous, that smile was fruitful also. The new society, the desire for equality and concession, and that beginning of fraternity which called itself tolerance, reciprocal good-will, the just accord of men and rights, reason recognized as the supreme law, the annihilation of prejudices and fixed opinions, the serenity of souls, the spirit of indulgence and of pardon, harmony, peace—behold, what has come from that great smile!

On the day—very near, without any doubt—when the identity of wisdom and clemency will be recognized, the day when the amnesty will be proclaimed, I affirm it, up there, in the stars, Voltaire will smile.

Gentlemen, between two servants of Humanity, who appeared eighteen hundred years apart, there is a mysterious relation.

To combat Pharisaism; to unmask imposture; to overthrow tyrannies, usurpations, prejudices, falsehoods, superstitions; to demolish

the temple in order to rebuild it, that is to say, to replace the false by the true; to attack a ferocious magistracy; to attack a sanguinary priesthood; to take a whip and drive the money-changers from the sanctuary; to reclaim the heritage of the disinherited; to protect the weak, the poor, the suffering, the overwhelmed, to struggle for the persecuted and oppressed—that was the war of Jesus Christ! And who waged that war? It was Voltaire.

The completion of the evangelical work is the philosophical work; the spirit of meekness began, the spirit of tolerance continued. Let us say it with a sentiment of profound respect; JESUS WEPT; VOLTAIRE SMILED. Of that divine tear and of that human smile is composed the sweetness of the present civilization.

Did Voltaire always smile? No. He was often indignant. You remarked it in my first words.

Certainly, gentlemen, measure, reserve, proportion are reason's supreme law. We can say that moderation is the very breath of the philosopher. The effort of the wise man ought to be to condense into a sort of serene certainty all the approximations of which philosophy is composed. But at certain moments, the passion for the true rises powerful and violent, and it is within its right in so doing, like the stormy winds which purify. Never, I insist upon it, will any wise man shake those two august supports of social labor, justice and hope; and all will respect the judge, if he is embodied justice, and all will venerate the priest if he represents hope. But if the magistracy calls itself torture, if the Church calls itself Inquisition, then Humanity looks them in the face and says to the judge: "I will none of thy law!" and says to the priest: "I will none of thy dogma! I will none of thy fire on the earth and thy hell in the future!" Then philosophy rises in wrath, and arraigns the judge before justice, and the priest before God!

This is what Voltaire did. It was grand.

What Voltaire was, I have said; what his age was I am about to say.

Gentlemen, great men rarely come alone; large trees seem larger when they dominate a forest; there they are at home. There was a forest of minds around Voltaire; that forest was the eighteenth century. Among those minds there were summits: Montesquieu, Buffon, Beaumarchais, and among others, two, the highest after Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot. Those thinkers taught men to rea-

son; reasoning well leads to acting well; justness in the mind becomes justice in the heart. Those toilers for progress labored usefully. Buffon founded naturalism; Beaumarchais discovered, outside of Moliére, a kind of comedy until then unknown almost, the social comedy; Montesquieu made in law some excavations so profound that he succeeded in exhuming the right. As to Rousseau, as to Diderot, let us pronounce those two names apart; Diderot, a vast intelligence, inquisitive, a tender heart, a thirst for justice, wished to give certain notions as the foundation of true ideas, and created the Encyclopædia. Rousseau rendered to woman an admirable service, completing the mother by the nurse, placing near each other those two majesties of the cradle. Rousseau, a writer, eloquent and pathetic, a profound oratorical dreamer, often divined and proclaimed political truth; his ideal borders on the real; he had the glory of being the first man in France who called himself citizen. The civic fibre vibrates in Rousseau; that which vibrates in Voltaire is the universal fibre. One can say that in the fruitful eighteenth century, Rousseau represented the people; Voltaire, still more vast, represented Man. Those powerful writers disappeared, but they left us their soul, the Revolution.

Yes, the French Revolution was their soul. It was their radiant manifestation. It came from them; we find them everywhere in that blessed and superb catastrophe, which formed the conclusion of the past and the opening of the future. In that clear light, which is peculiar to revolutions, and which beyond causes permits us to perceive effects, and beyond the first plan the second, we see behind Danton Diderot, behind Robespierre Rousseau, and behind Mirabeau Voltaire. These formed those.

Gentlemen, to sum up epochs, by giving them the names of men, to name ages, to make of them in some sort human personages, has only been done by three peoples: Greece, Italy, France. We say, the Age of Pericles, the Age of Augustus, the Age of Leo X, the Age of Louis XIV, the Age of Voltaire. Those appellations have a great significance. This privilege of giving names to periods belonging exclusively to Greece, to Italy, and to France, is the highest mark of civilization. Until Voltaire, they were the names of the chiefs of states; Voltaire is more than the chief of a state; he is a chief of ideas; with Voltaire a new cycle begins. We feel that henceforth the supreme governmental power is to be thought. Civilization

obeyed force; it will obey the ideal. It was the sceptre and the sword broken, to be replaced by the ray of light; that is to say, authority transfigured into liberty. Henceforth, no other sovereignty than the law for the people, and the conscience for the individual. For each of us, the two aspects of progress separate themselves clearly, and they are these: to exercise one's right; that is to say, to be a man; to perform one's duty; that is to say, to be a citizen.

Such is the signification of that word, the Age of Voltaire; such is the meaning of that august event, the French Revolution.

The two memorable centuries that preceded the eighteenth, prepared for it; Rabelais warned royalty in *Gargantua,* and Molière warned the Church in *Tartuffe.* Hatred of force and respect for right are visible in those two illustrious spirits.

Whoever says today, might makes right, performs an act of the Middle Ages, and speaks to men three hundred years behind their time.

Gentlemen, the nineteenth century glorifies the eighteenth century. The eighteenth proposed, the nineteenth concludes. And my last word will be the declaration, tranquil but inflexible, of progress.

The time has come. The right has found its formula: human federation.

Today, force is called violence, and begins to be judged; war is arraigned. Civilization, upon the complaint of the human race, orders the trial, and draws up the great criminal indictment of conquerors and captains. This witness, History, is summoned. The reality appears. The factitious brilliancy is dissipated. In many cases the hero is a species of assassin. The peoples begin to comprehend that increasing the magnitude of a crime cannot be its diminution; that, if to kill is a crime, to kill many cannot be an extenuating circumstance; that, if to steal is a shame, to invade cannot be a glory; that *Te Deums* do not count for much in this matter: that homicide is homicide; that bloodshed is bloodshed; that it serves nothing to call one's self Cæsar or Napoleon; and that, in the eyes of the eternal God, the figure of a murderer is not changed because, instead of a gallows cap, there is placed upon his head an emperor's crown.

Ah! let us proclaim absolute truths. Let us dishonor war. No; glorious war does not exist. No; it is not good, and it is not useful, to make corpses. No; it cannot be that life travails for death. No; oh, mothers that surround me, it cannot be that war, the robber,

should continue to take from you your children. No; it cannot be that women should bear children in pain, that men should be born, that people should plow and sow, that the farmer should fertilize the fields, and the workmen enrich the city, that industry should produce marvels, that genius should produce prodigies, that the vast human activity should in presence of the starry sky, multiply efforts and creations, all to result in that frightful international exposition which is called a field of battle!

The true field of battle, behold it here! It is this rendezvous of the masterpieces of human labor which Paris offers the world at this moment.[1]

The true victory is the victory of Paris.

Alas! we cannot hide it from ourselves, that the present hour, worthy as it is of admiration and respect, has still some mournful aspects; there are still shadows on the horizon; the tragedy of the peoples is not finished; war, wicked war, is still here, and it has the audacity to lift its head in the midst of this august festival of peace. Princes for two years past, obstinately adhere to a fatal misunderstanding; their discord forms an obstacle to our concord, and they are ill-inspired to condemn us to the statement of such a contrast.

Let this contrast lead us back to Voltaire. In the presence of menacing possibilities, let us be more pacific than ever. Let us turn toward that great death, toward that great life, toward that great spirit. Let us bend before the venerated tombs. Let us take counsel of him whose life, useful to men, was extinguished a hundred years ago, but whose work is immortal. Let us take counsel of the other powerful thinkers, the auxiliaries of this glorious Voltaire, of Jean Jacques, of Diderot, of Montesquieu. Let us give the word to those great voices. Let us stop the effusion of human blood. Enough! enough! despots! Ah! barbarism persists; very well, let civilization be indignant. Let the eighteenth century come to the help of the nineteenth. The philosophers, our predecessors, are the apostles of the true; let us invoke those illustrious shades; let them, before monarchies meditate wars, proclaim the right of man to life, the right of conscience to liberty, the sovereignty of reason, the holiness of labor, the beneficence of peace; and since night issues from the thrones, let the light come from the tombs.

[1] The exposition of 1878 was then open in Paris.

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